THE
Young Trawler
A Story of
Life & Death & Rescue
PEARSON'S

THE YOUNG TRAWLER

A STORY OF LIFE AND DEATH AND RESCUE ON THE NORTH SEA

BY R. M. BALLANTYNE

AUTHOR OF "DUSTY DIAMONDS;" "THE BATTERY AND THE BOILER;" "THE GIANT OF THE NORTH;" "POST HASTE; A TALE OF HER MAJESTY'S MAILS;" "IN THE TRACK OF THE TROOPS;" "THE SETTLER AND THE SAVAGE;" "UNDER THE WAVES;" "RIVERS OF ICE;" "BLACK IVORY;" "THE PIRATE CITY;" "THE NORSEMEN IN THE WEST;" "THE IRON HORSE;" "THE FLOATING LIGHT OF THE GOODWIN SANDS;" "ERLING THE BOLD;" "FIGHTING THE FLAMES;" "SHIFTING WINDS;" "DEEP DOWN;" "THE LIGHTHOUSE;" "GASCOYNE;" "THE LIFE BOAT;" "THE GOLDEN DREAM," "THE LONELY ISLAND;" ETC. ETC.

With Illustrations

LONDON
JAMES NISBET & CO., LIMITED
21 BERNERS STREET

[*All rights reserved*]

PREFACE.

THE object of this tale is to give some idea of the life led by our deep-sea trawlers, who toil hard and incessantly from January to December in furnishing supplies to our fishmarkets, and about whose career, joys, sorrows, and sufferings, far too little is known by the general public.

The tale also shows, to some extent, the immense value of the MISSION TO DEEP SEA FISHERMEN in ameliorating the hard lot of these men, by carrying to them the Gospel of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ; supplying them with healthy literature, as well as other much-needed comforts; and in driving their arch-enemy the *coper*, or floating grog-shop, from the North Sea.

The Offices of the Mission ("M. D. S. F.") are at Bridge House, 181 Queen Victoria Street.

R. M. BALLANTYNE.

HARROW-ON-THE-HILL.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAP. I.—INTRODUCES DEEP-SEA FISHERMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES,	1
II.—A CONTRAST TO CHAPTER I.,	11
III.—INTRODUCES CONSTERNATION INTO A DELICATE HOUSEHOLD,	28
IV.—BILLY BRIGHT THE FISHER-BOY VISITS LONDON—HAS A FIGHT—ENLARGES HIS MIND, AND UNDERTAKES BUSINESS,	46
V.—HOW BILLY CONDUCTS THE BUSINESS—HOW CAPTAIN BREAM OVERCOMES THE SISTERS, AND HOW JESSIE SEAWARD SEES MYSTERY IN EVERYTHING,	65
VI.—THE CURSE OF THE NORTH SEA; AND THE TRAWLS AT WORK,	85
VII.—A HAUL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES—MYSTERIOUS NEWS FROM THE LAND,	100
VIII.—DANGERS, DIFFICULTIES, AND EXCITEMENTS OF THE TRAFFIC; LOADING THE STEAMER,	117
IX.—ANOTHER DRAG-NET HAULED—THE MISSION SMACK,	131
X.—A STRONG CONTRAST—A VICTIM OF THE COPER,	148
XI.—RUTH AND CAPTAIN BREAM TAKE TO SCHEMING,	161
XII.—CAPTAIN BREAM DEVELOPS A CAPACITY FOR SCHEMING,	174
XIII.—RUN DOWN IN A FOG—CAPTAIN BREAM ACTS SURPRISINGLY,	184
XIV.—RUTH'S HOPES AS TO HER PLOT BRIGHTEN A LITTLE,	201
XV.—A CLOUD COMES OVER RUTH'S HOPES, AND DIMS THEIR BRIGHTNESS,	211
XVI.—TEMPTATION ON THE DEEP,	225

PAGE

CHAP. XVII.—CONVERSE IN THE CABIN—THE TEMPTER AGAIN —AN ACCIDENT, ... 242

XVIII.—A DAY OF CALM FOLLOWED BY A NIGHT OF STORM, 259

XIX.—RUTH FINDS THAT EVERYTHING SEEMS TO GO AGAINST HER, ... 270

XX.—DETAILS TWO ROBBERIES AND AN AWFUL SITUATION, ... 283

XXI.—A HOPEFUL CLUE DISCOVERED, ... 298

XXII.—IN THE MISSION BOAT ON THE THAMES—THE DAMPING OF THE BODY CANNOT DAMP THE ARDENT SPIRIT, ... 305

XXIII.—*HOW CAPTAIN BREAM FARED IN HIS SEARCH*, AND WHAT CAME OF IT, ... 310

XXIV.—THE WRECK OF THE "EVENING STAR," . . 322

XXV.—BILLY AND HIS FATHER RETURN HOME, . . 333

XXVI.—THE HOUSE OF MOURNING, ... 342

XXVII.—THE CAPTAIN'S APPETITE RESTORED, AND RUTH IN A NEW LIGHT, ... 352

XXVIII.—OUT WITH THE SHORT BLUE AGAIN, . . 363

XXIX.—ANOTHER FIGHT AND—VICTORY, . . . 373

XXX.—THE CLIMAX REACHED AT LAST, . . . 385

XXXI.—THE LAST, ... 396

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

BILLY AT THE HELM (p. 47), *Frontispiece.*

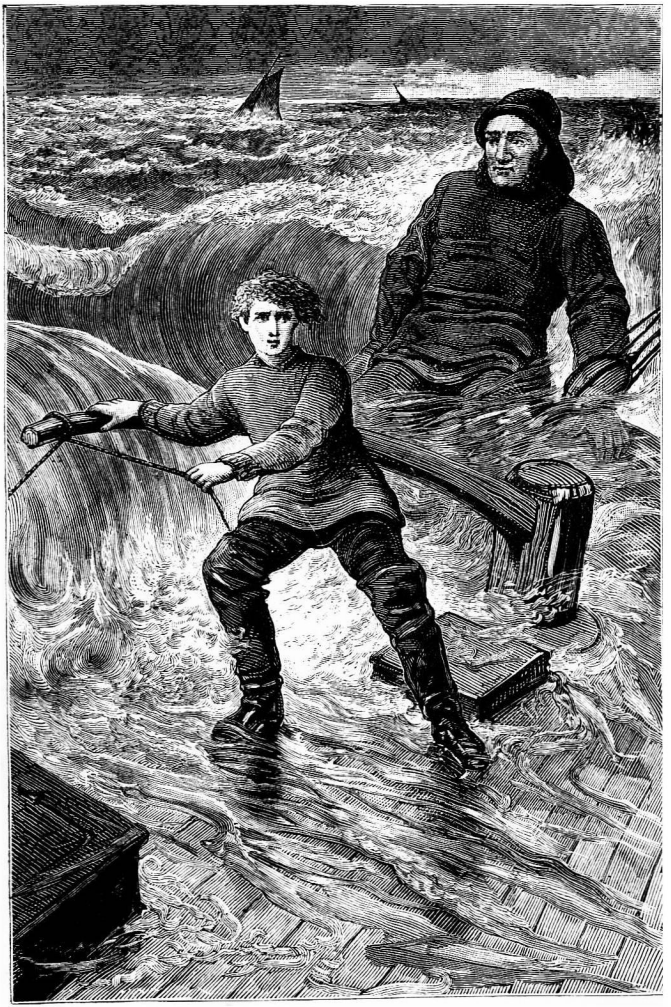
VIGNETTE TITLE.

A GOOD HAUL, ... *facing page* 103

LOADING THE STEAMER, ... 128

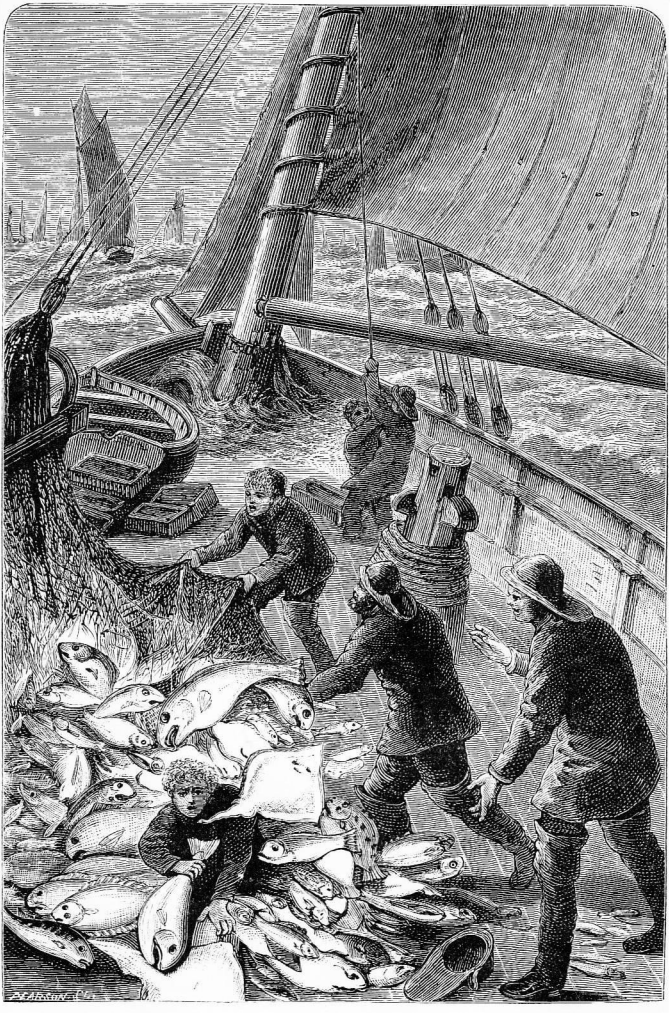
THE CAPTAIN AND RUTH IN THE LIBRARY, 163

THE CAPTAIN SEARCHING FOR HIS SISTER, . 319

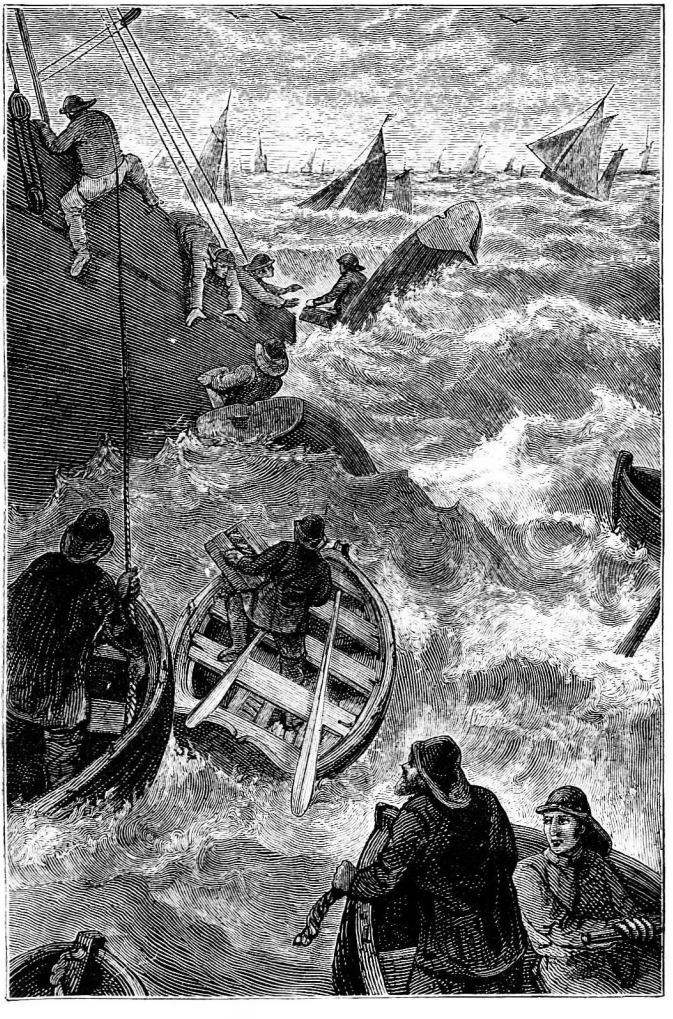


BILLY AT THE HELM.—PAGE 47.

(*Frontispiece.*)

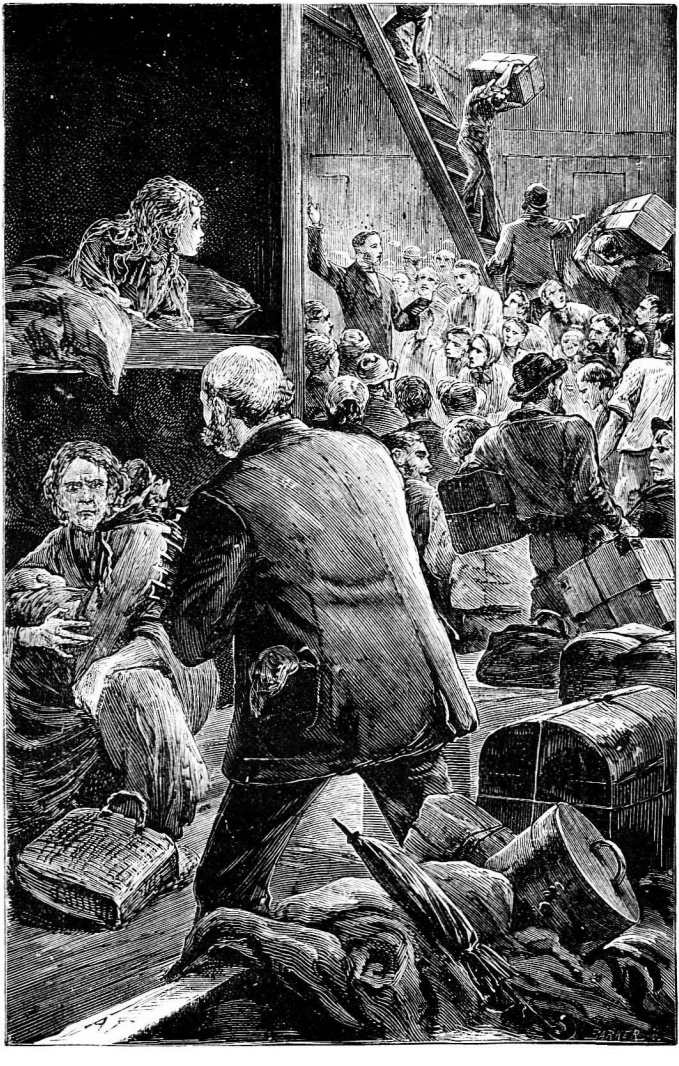


A GOOD HAUL.—Page 103.



LOADING THE STEAMER.—PAGE 128.

THE CAPTAIN AND RUTH IN THE LIBRARY.—Page 163.



THE CAPTAIN SEARCHING FOR HIS SISTER.—Page 319.

THE YOUNG TRAWLER.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES DEEP-SEA FISHERMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

On a certain breezy morning in October—not many years ago—a wilderness of foam rioted wildly over those dangerous sands which lie off the port of Yarmouth, where the *Evening Star*, fishing smack, was getting ready for sea.

In one of the narrow lanes or "Rows" peculiar to that town, the skipper of the smack stood at his own door grumbling. He was a broad burly man, a little past the prime of life, but prematurely aged by hard work and hard living.

"He's always out o' the way when he's wanted, an' always in the way when he's not wanted," said the skipper angrily to his wife, of whom he was at the moment taking, as one of his mates remarked, a tender farewell.

"Don't be hard on him, David," pleaded the wife, tearfully as she looked up in her husband's face.

"He's only a bit thoughtless; and I shouldn't wonder if he was already down at the smack."

"If he's not," returned the fisherman with a frown, as he clenched his huge right hand—and a hard and horny hand it was, from constant grappling with ropes, oars, hand-spikes, and the like—"if he's not, I'll—"

He stopped abruptly, as he looked down at his wife's eyes, and the frown faded. No wonder, for that wife's eyes were soft and gentle, and her face was fair and very attractive as well as refined in expression, though not particularly pretty.

"Well, old girl, come, I won't be hard on 'im. Now I'm off,—good-day." And with that the fisherman stooped to kiss his wife, who returned the salute with interest. At the same time she thrust a packet into his hand.

"What's this, Nell?"

"A Testament, David—from me. It will do your soul good if you will read it. And the tract wrapped round it is from a lady."

The frown returned to the man's face as he growled—"What lady?"

"The lady with the curious name, who was down here last summer for sea-bathing; don't you remember Miss Ruth Dotropy? It is a temperance tract."

David Bright made a motion as though he were

about to fling the parcel away, but he thought better of it, and thrust it into the capacious pocket of his rough coat. The brow cleared again as he left his wife, who called after him, "Don't be hard on Billy, David; remember he's our only one—and he's not bad, just a little thoughtless."

"Never fear, Nell, I'll make a man of him."

Lighting a large pipe as he spoke, the skipper of the *Evening Star* nodded farewell, and sauntered away.

In another of the narrow lanes of Yarmouth another fisherman stood at his own door, also taking leave of his wife. This man was the mate —just engaged—of David Bright's vessel, and very different in some respects from the skipper, being tall, handsome, fresh and young—not more than twenty-four—as well as powerful of build. His wife, a good-looking young woman, with their first-born in her arms, had bidden him good-bye.

We will not trouble the reader with more of their parting conversation than the last few words.

"Now, Maggie, dear, whatever you do, take care o' that blessed babby."

"Trust me for that, Joe," said Maggie, imprinting a kiss of considerable violence and fervour on the said baby, which gazed at its mother—as it gazed at everything—in blank amazement.

"An' don't forget to see Miss Ruth, if you can, or send a message to her, about that matter."

"I'll not forget, Joe."

The mate of the *Evening Star* bestowed a parting kiss of extreme gentleness on the wondering infant, and hastened away.

He had not proceeded far when he encountered a creature which filled his heart with laughter. Indeed Joe Davidson's heart was easily filled with emotions of every kind, for he was an unusually sympathetic fellow, and rather fond of a joke.

The creature referred to was a small boy of thirteen years of age or thereabouts, with a pretty little face, a Grecian little nose, a rose-bud of a mouth, curly fair hair, bright blue eyes, and a light handsome frame, which, however, was a smart, active, and wiry frame. He was made to look as large and solid as possible by means of the rough costume of a fisherman, and there was a bold look in the blue eyes which told of a strong will. What amused Joe Davidson most, however, was the tremendous swagger in the creature's gait, and the imperturbable gravity with which he smoked a cigar! The little fellow was so deeply absorbed in thought as he passed the mate that he did not raise his eyes from the ground. An irresistible impulse seized on Joe. He stooped, and gently plucked the cigar from the boy's mouth.

Instantly the creature doubled his little fists, and, without taking the trouble to look so high as his adversary's face, rushed at his legs, which he began to kick and pommel furiously.

As the legs were cased in heavy sea-boots he failed to make any impression on them, and after a few moments of exhausting effort he stepped back so as to get a full look at his foe.

"What d'ee mean by that, Joe Davidson, you fathom of impudence?" he demanded, with flushed face and flashing eyes.

"Only that I wants a light," answered the mate, pulling out his pipe, and applying the cigar to it.

"Humph!" returned the boy, mollified, and at the same time tickled, by the obvious pretence; "you might have axed leave first, I think."

"So I might. I ax parding *now*," returned Joe, handing back the cigar; "good-day, Billy."

The little boy gazed after the fisherman in speechless admiration, for the cool quiet manner in which the thing had been done had, as he said, taken the wind completely out of his sails, and prevented his usually ready reply.

Replacing the cigar in the rose-bud he went puffing along till he reached the house of David Bright, which he entered.

"Your father 's gone, Billy," said Mrs. Bright.

"Haste ye after him, else you 'll catch it. Oh! do give up smokin', dear boy. Good-bye. God keep you, my darling."

She caught the little fellow in a hasty embrace.

"Hold on, mother, you 'll bust me!" cried Billy, returning the embrace, however, with affectionate vigour. "An' if I 'm late, daddy will sail without me. Let go!"

He shouted the last words as if the reference had been to the anchor of the *Evening Star*. His mother laughed as she released him, and he ran down to the quay with none of his late dignity remaining. He knew his father's temper well, and was fearful of being left behind.

He was just in time. The little smack was almost under weigh as he tumbled rather than jumped on board. Ere long she was out beyond the breakers that marked the shoals, and running to the eastward under a stiff breeze.

This was little Billy's first trip to sea in his father's fishing smack, and he went not as a passenger but as a "hand." It is probable that there never sailed out of Yarmouth a lad who was prouder of his position than little Billy of the *Evening Star*. He was rigged from top to toe in a brand-new suit of what we may style nautical garments. His thin little body was made to appear of twice its natural bulk by a broad-shouldered

pilot-cloth coat, under which was a thick guernsey. He was almost extinguished by a large yellow sou'-wester, and all but swallowed up by a pair of sea-boots that reached to his hips. These boots, indeed, seemed so capacious as to induce the belief that if he did not take care the part of his body that still remained outside of them might fall inside and disappear.

Altogether—what between pride of position, vanity in regard to the new suit, glee at being fairly at sea and doing for himself, and a certain humorous perception that he was ridiculously small—little Billy presented a very remarkable appearance as he stood that day on the deck of his father's vessel, with his little legs straddling wide apart, after the fashion of nautical men, and his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his sea-going coat.

For some time he was so engrossed with the novelty of his situation, and the roll of the crested waves, that his eyes did not rise much higher than the legs of his comparatively gigantic associates; but when curiosity at last prompted him to scan their faces, great was his surprise to observe among them Joe Davidson, the young man who had plucked the cigar from his lips in Yarmouth.

"What! are *you* one o' the hands, Joe?" he asked, going towards the man with an abortive attempt to walk steadily on the pitching deck.

"Ay, lad, I'm your father's mate," replied Joe. "But surely *you* are not goin' as a hand?"

"That's just what I am," returned Billy, with a look of dignity which was somewhat marred by a heavy lurch causing him to stagger. "I'm part owner, d'ee see, an' ready to take command when the old man retires, so you'd better mind your helm, young man, an' steer clear of impudence in future, if you don't want to lead the life of a dog aboard of this here smack."

"I'll try, sir," said Joe Davidson, touching his forelock, while a humorous twinkle lit up his bright eyes.

"Hallo! Billy!" shouted the skipper, who was steering; "come here, boy. You didn't come aboard to idle, you know. I've let you have a good look at the sea all for nothin'. It's time now that you went to work to larn your duties. Zulu!"

The last word caused a woolly head to protrude from the after hatchway, revealing a youth about twice the size of Billy. Having some drops of black blood in him this lad had been styled Zulu —and, being a handy fellow, had been made cook.

"Here, take this boy below," said the skipper, "and teach him something—anything you like, so as you keep him at work. No idlers allowed on board, you know."

"Yes, sar," said Zulu.

Billy was delighted to obey. He was naturally a smart, active fellow, and not only willing but proud to submit to discipline. He descended a short ladder into the little cabin with which he had become acquainted, as a visitor, when the smack was in port on former occasions. With Zulu he was also acquainted, that youth having been for some time in his father's service.

"Kin you do cookin'?" asked Zulu with a grin that revealed an unusually large cavern full of glistening teeth, mingled with more than an average allowance of tongue and gums.

"Oh! I say," remonstrated Billy, "it's growed bigger than ever!"

Zulu expanded his mouth to its utmost, and shut his eyes in enjoyment of the complimentary joke.

"Ob course it hab," he said on recovering; "I's 'bliged to eat so much at sea dat de mout gits wider ebery trip. Dat leetle hole what you 've got in your face 'll git so big as mine fore long, Billy. Den you be like some ob de leetle fishes we catch—all mout, and no body worth mentioning. But you no tell me yit: Kin you do cookin'?"

"Oh yes, I can manage a Yarmouth bloater," replied Billy.

"But," said Zulu, "kin you cook a 'tater widout makin' him's outside all of a mush, an' him's inside same so as a stone?"

Instead of answering, Billy sat down on the settle which ran round the cabin and looked up at his dark friend very solemnly.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Zulu.

"There—there's something wrong wi' me," said Billy, with a faint attempt to smile as he became rather pale.

Seeing this, his friend quietly put a bucket beside him.

"I say, Zulu," observed the poor boy with a desperate attempt at pleasantry, "I wonder what's up."

"Des nuffin' up yit, but he won't be long," replied the young cook with a look full of sympathy.

It would be unjust to our little hero to proceed further. This being, as we have said, his first trip to sea, he naturally found himself, after an hour or two, stretched out in one of the bunks which surrounded the little cabin. There he was permitted to lie and think longingly of his mother, surrounded by dense tobacco smoke, hot vapours, and greasy fumes, until he blushed to find himself wishing with all his heart that he had never left home!

There we will leave him to meditate and form useless resolves, which he never carried out, while we introduce to the reader some of the other actors in our tale.

CHAPTER II.

A CONTRAST TO CHAPTER I.

FROM that heaving grey wilderness of waters called the North Sea we pass now to that lively wilderness of bricks and mortar called London.

West-end mansions are not naturally picturesque or interesting subjects either for the brush or the pen, and we would not willingly drag our readers into one of them, did not circumstances—over which we have not a shadow of control—compel us to do so.

The particular mansion to which we now direct attention belonged to a certain Mrs. Dotropy, whose husband's ancestors, by the way, were said to have come over with the Conqueror—whether in his own ship or in one of the bumboats that followed is not certain. They were De Tropys at that time, but, having sunk in the social scale in the course of centuries, and then risen again in succeeding centuries through the medium of trade, they re-appeared on the surface with their patronymic transformed as now presented.

"Mother," said Ruth Dotropy to a magnificent duchess-like woman, "I've come to ask you about the poor—"

"Ruth, dear," interrupted the mother, "I wish you would not worry me about the poor! They're a troublesome, ill-doing set; always grumbling, dirty, ill-natured, suspicious, and envious of the rich—as if it was our fault that we are rich! I don't want to hear anything more about the poor."

Ruth, who was a soft-cheeked, soft-handed, and soft-hearted girl of eighteen, stood hat in hand before her mother with a slight smile on her rosy lips.

"You are not quite just to the poor, mother," returned Ruth, scarce able to restrain a laugh at her parent's vehemence. "Some of them are all that you say, no doubt, but there are many, even among the poorest of the poor, who are good-natured, well-doing, unsuspicious, and respectful, not only to the rich but also to each other and to everybody. There is Mrs. Wolsey, for instance, she—"

"Oh! but she's an exception, you know," said Mrs. Dotropy, "there are not many like Mrs. Wolsey."

"And there is Mrs. Gladman," continued Ruth.

"Yes, but she's another exception."

"And Mrs. Robbie."

"Why, Ruth, what's the use of picking out all the exceptions to prove your point? Of course the

exception proves the rule—at least so the proverb says—but a great many exceptions prove nothing that I know of except—that is—but what's the use of arguing, child, you'll never be convinced. Come, how much do you want me to give?"

Easy-going Mrs. Dotropy's mind, we need scarcely point out, was of a confused type, and she "hated argument." Perhaps, on the whole, it was to the advantage of her friends and kindred that she did so.

"I only want you to give a little time, mother," replied Ruth, swinging her hat to and fro, while she looked archly into Mrs. Dotropy's large, dignified, and sternly-kind countenance, if we may venture on such an expression,—"I want you to go with me and see—"

"Yes, yes, I know what you're going to say, child, you want me to go and 'see for myself,' which means that I'm to soil my boots in filthy places, subject my ears to profanity, my eyes to horrible sights, and my nose to intolerable smells. No, Ruth, I cannot oblige you. Of what use would it be? If my doing this would relieve the miseries of the poor, you might reasonably ask me to go among them, but it would not. I give them as much money as I can afford to give, and, as far as I can see, it does them no good. They never seem better off, and they always want more. They are

not even grateful for it. Just look at Lady Open-hand. What good does she accomplish by her liberality and her tearful eyes, and sympathetic heart, even though her feelings are undoubtedly genuine? Only the other day I chanced to walk behind her along several streets and saw her stop and give money to seven or eight beggars who accosted her. She never *can* refuse any one who asks with a pitiful look and a pathetic cock-and-bull story. Several of them were young and strong, and quite undeserving of charity. Three, I observed, went straight to a public-house with what she had given them, and the last, a small street boy, went into fits of suppressed laughter after she had passed, and made faces at her—finishing off by putting the thumb of his left hand to his nose, and spreading out his fingers as wide as possible. I do not understand the exact significance of that action, but there is something in it so intensely insolent that it is quite incompatible with the idea of gratitude."

"Yes, mother, I saw him too," said Ruth, with a demure look; "it curiously enough happened that I was following you at the time. You afterwards passed the same boy with a refusal, I suppose?"

"Yes, child, of course—and a reproof."

"I thought so. Well, after you had passed, he not only applied his left thumb to his nose and spread his fingers, but also put the thumb of his right

hand against the little finger of his left, and spread out the other five fingers at *you*. So, whatever he meant Lady Openhand to receive, he meant you to have twice as much. But Lady Openhand makes a mistake, I think, she does not *consider* the poor she only feels deeply for them and gives to them."

"*Only* feels and gives!" repeated Mrs. Dotropy, with a look of solemn amazement.

Being quite incapable of disentangling or expressing the flood of ideas that overwhelmed her, the good lady relieved herself, after a few broken sentences, with the assertion that it was of no use arguing with Ruth, for Ruth would never be convinced.

She was so far right, in that her daughter could not change her mind on the strength of mere dogmatic assertion, even although she was a pliant and teachable little creature. So, at least, Mr. Lewis, her pastor, had found her when he tried to impress on her a few important lessons—such as, that it is better to give than to receive; that man *is* his brother's keeper; that we are commanded to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, who came to save the lost, to rescue the perishing, and who fed the hungry.

"But, mother," resumed Ruth, "I want you to go with me to-day to visit some poor people who are *not* troublesome, who are perfectly clean, are never ill-natured, suspect nothing, and envy nobody."

"They must indeed be wonderful people," said Mrs. Dotropy, with a laugh at Ruth's enthusiasm, "quite angelic."

"They are as nearly so as mortals ever become, I think," returned Ruth, putting on her hat; "won't you come, mother?"

Now, Mrs. Dotropy had the faculty of giving in gracefully, although she could not argue. Rising with an amused smile, she kissed Ruth's forehead and went to prepare for a visit to the poor.

Let us now turn to a small street scarcely ten minutes' walk from the mansion where the above conversation took place.

It was what may be styled a Lilliputian street. Almost everything in it was small. The houses were small; the shops were small; the rents—well, *they* were certainly not so small as they should have been; the doors and windows were small; and the very children that played in the gutter, with an exceedingly small amount of clothing on them, were rather diminutive. Some of the doors stood open, revealing the fact that it had been thought wise by the builders of the houses to waste no space in lobbies or entrance halls. One or two, however, displayed entries, or passages—dark and narrow—the doors to which were blistered and severely battered, because, being the public property of several families, they had no particular owner to protect them

There was a small flat over a green-grocer's shop to which one of the cleanest of those entries led. It consisted of two rooms, a light-closet and a kitchen, and was low-ceilinged and poorly furnished, but there was a distinct air of cleanliness about it, with a consequent tendency to comfort. The carpet of the chief room was very old, but it had been miraculously darned and patched. The table was little larger than that of a gigantic doll's-house, but it was covered with a clean though threadbare cloth that had seen better days, and on it lay several old and well-thumbed books, besides two work-baskets.

In an old—a very old—easy-chair at one side of the fire sat a lady rather beyond middle age, with her hands clasped on her lap, and her eyes gazing dreamily at the fire. Perhaps she was speculating on the question how long two small lumps of coal and a little dross would last. The grate in which that amount of fuel burned was a miniature specimen of simplicity,—a mere hollow in the wall with two bars across. The fire itself was so small that nothing but constant solicitude saved it from extinction.

There was much of grey mingled with the fair tresses of the lady, and the remains of beauty were very distinct on a countenance the lines of which suggested suffering, gentleness, submission, and

humility. Perchance the little sigh that escaped her as she gazed at the preposterously small fire had reference to days gone by when health revelled in her veins; when wealth was lavished in her father's house; when food and fun were plentiful; when grief and care were scarce. Whatever her thoughts might have been, they were interrupted by the entrance of another lady, who sat down beside her, laid a penny on the table, and looked at the lady in the easy-chair with a peculiar, half-comical expression.

"It is our *last*, Jessie," she said, and as she said it the expression intensified, yet it seemed a little forced.

There needed no magician to tell that these two were sisters. The indescribable similarity was strong, yet the difference was great. Jessie was evidently, though not much, the elder.

"It 's almost absurd, Kate," she said, "to think that we should actually have—come—at last—to—"

She stopped, and Kate looked earnestly at her. There was a tremulous motion about the corners of both their mouths. Jessie laid her head on Kate's shoulder, and both wept—gently. They did not "burst into tears," for they were not by nature demonstrative. Their position made it easy to slide down on their knees and bury their heads side by side in the great old easy-chair that had

been carefully kept when all the rest was sold, because it had belonged to their father.

We may not record the scarce audible prayer. Those who have suffered know what it was. Those who have not suffered could not understand it. After the prayer they sat down in a somewhat tranquil mood to "talk it over." Poor things—they had often talked it over without much result, except that blessed one of evolving mutual sympathy.

"If I were only a little younger and stronger," said Kate, who had been, and still was of a lively disposition, "I would offer myself as a housemaid, but that is out of the question now; besides, I could not leave you, Jessie, the invalid of the family—that once was."

"Come, Kate, let us have no reference to the invalid of the family any more. I am getting quite strong. Do you know I do believe that poverty is doing my health good; my appetite is improving. I really feel quite hungry now."

"We will have tea, then," said Kate, getting up briskly; "the things that we got will make one good meal, at all events, though the cost of them has reduced our funds to the low ebb of one penny; so, let us enjoy ourselves while it lasts!"

Kate seized the poker as she spoke, and gave the fire a thrust that almost extinguished it. Then she heaped on a few ounces of coal with reckless in-

difference to the future, and put on a little kettle to boil. Soon the small table was spread with a white cloth, a silver teapot, and two beautiful cups that had been allowed them out of the family wreck; a loaf of bread, a very small quantity of brown sugar, a smaller quantity of skim-milk, and the smallest conceivable pat of salt butter.

"And this took all the money except one penny?" asked Jessie, regarding the table with a look of mingled sadness and amazement.

"All—every farthing," replied Kate, "and I consider the result a triumph of domestic economy."

The sisters were about to sit down to enjoy their triumph when a bounding step was heard on the stair.

"That's Ruth," exclaimed Kate, rising and hurrying to the door; "quick, get out the other cup, Jessie. Oh! Ruth, darling, this is good of you. We were sure you would come this week, as—"

She stopped abruptly, for a large presence loomed on the stair behind Ruth.

"I have brought mamma to see you, Kate—the Misses Seaward, mamma; you have often heard me speak of them."

"Yes, dear, and I have much pleasure in making the Misses Seaward's acquaintance. My daughter is very fond of you, ladies, I know, and the little puss

has brought me here by way of a surprise, I suppose, for we came out to pay a very different kind of visit. She—"

"Oh! but, mamma," hastily exclaimed Ruth, who saw that her mother, whom she had hitherto kept in ignorance of the circumstances of the poor ladies, was approaching dangerous ground, "our visit here *has* to do with—with the people we were speaking about. I have come," she added, turning quickly to Miss Jessie, "to transact a little business with you—about those poor people, you remember, whom you were so sorry for. Mamma will be glad to hear what we have to say about them. Won't you, mamma?"

"Of course, of course, dear," replied Mrs. Dotropy, who, however, experienced a slight feeling of annoyance at being thus dragged into a preliminary consideration of the affairs of poor people before paying a personal visit to them. Being good-natured, however, and kind, she submitted gracefully and took note, while chairs were placed round the table for this amateur Board, that ladies with moderate means—obviously *very* moderate—appeared to enjoy their afternoon tea quite as much as rich people. You see, it never entered into Mrs. Dotropy's mind—how could it?—that what she imagined to be "afternoon tea" was dinner, tea, and supper combined in one meal,

beyond which there lay no prospective meal, except what one penny might purchase.

With a mysterious look, and a gleam of delight in her eyes, Ruth drew forth a well-filled purse, the contents of which, in shillings, sixpences, and coppers, she poured out upon the tea-table.

"There," she said triumphantly, "I have collected all that myself, and I've come to consult you how much of it should be given to each, and how we are to get them to take it."

"How kind of you, Ruth!" exclaimed Kate and Jessie Seaward, gazing on the coin with intense, almost miserly satisfaction.

"Nonsense! it's not kind a bit," responded Ruth; "if you knew the pleasure I've had in gathering it, and telling the sad story of the poor people; and then, the thought of the comfort it will bring to them, though it *is* so little after all."

"It won't appear little in their eyes, Ruth," said Kate, "for you can't think how badly off some of them are. I assure you when Jessie and I think of it, as we often do, it makes us quite miserable."

Poor Misses Seaward! In their sympathy with the distress of others they had quite forgotten, for the moment, their own extreme poverty. They had even failed to observe that their own last penny had been inadvertently but hopelessly mingled with

the coin which Ruth had so triumphantly showered upon the table.

"I've got a paper here with the name of each," continued the excited girl, "so that we may divide the money in the proportions you think best. That, however, will be easy, but I confess I have puzzled my brain in vain to hit on a way to get poor Bella Tilly to accept charity."

"That will be no difficulty," said Jessie, "because we won't offer her charity. She has been knitting socks for sale lately, so we can buy these."

"Oh! how stupid I am," cried Ruth, "the idea of buying something from her never once occurred to me. We'll buy all her socks—yes, and put our own price on them too; capital!"

"Who is Bella Tilly?" asked Mrs. Dotropy.

"A young governess," replied Jessie, "whose health has given way. She is an orphan—has not, I believe, a relative in the whole world—and has been obliged to give up her last situation, not only because of her health, but because she was badly treated."

"But how about poor Mr. Garnet the musician?" resumed Ruth, "has *he* anything to sell?"

"I think not," answered Kate; "the sweet sounds in which he deals can now be no longer made since the paralytic stroke rendered his left arm powerless. His flute was the last thing he had to sell, and he

did not part with it until hunger compelled him; and even then only after the doctors had told him that recovery was impossible. But I daresay we shall find some means of overcoming his scruples. He has relatives, but they are all either poor or heartless, and between the two he is starving."

Thus, one by one, the cases of those poor ones were considered until all Ruth's money was apportioned, and Mrs. Dotropy had become so much interested, that she added a sovereign to the fund, for the express benefit of Bella Tilly. Thereafter, Ruth and her mother departed, leaving the list and the pile of money on the table, for the sisters had undertaken to distribute the fund. Before leaving, however, Ruth placed a letter in Kate's hand, saying that it had reference to an institution which would interest them.

"Now isn't that nice?" said Kate, sitting down with a beaming smile, when their visitors had gone, "so like Ruth. Ah! if she only knew how much we need a little of that money. Well, well, we—"

"The tea is quite cold," interrupted Jessie, "and the fire has gone out!"

"Jessie!" exclaimed Kate with a sudden look of solemnity—"the *penny!*"

Jessie looked blankly at the table, and said—"Gone!"

"No, it is *there*," said Kate.

"Yes, but Ruth, you know, didn't count the money till she came here, and so did not detect the extra penny, and we forgot it. Every farthing there has been apportioned on that list, and must be accounted for. I couldn't bear to take a penny out of the sum, and have to tell Ruth that we kept it off because it was ours. It would seem so mean, for she cannot know how much we need it. Besides, from which of the poor people's little stores could we deduct it?"

This last argument had more weight with Kate than the others, so, with a little sigh, she proceeded to open Ruth's letter, while Jessie poured out a cup of cold tea, gazing pathetically the while at the pile of money which still lay glittering on the table.

Ruth's letter contained two £5 Bank of England notes, and ran as follows:—

"DEAREST JESSIE AND KATE,—I sent your screen to the institution for the sale of needlework, where it was greatly admired. One gentleman said it was quite a work of genius! a lady, who seemed to estimate genius more highly than the gentleman, bought it for £10, which I now enclose. In my opinion it was worth far more. However, it is gratifying that your first attempt in this way has been successful.

"Your loving RUTH."

"Loving indeed!" exclaimed Kate in a tremulous voice.

Jessie appeared to have choked on the cold tea, for, after some ineffectual attempts at speech, she retired to the window and coughed.

The first act of the sisters, on recovering, was to double the amount on Ruth's list of poor people, and to work out another sum in short division on the back of an old letter.

"Why did you deceive me, dear?" said Mrs. Dotropy, on reaching the street after her visit. "You said you were going with me to see poor people, in place of which you have taken me to hear a consultation *about* poor people with two ladies, and now you propose to return home."

"The two ladies are themselves *very* poor."

"No doubt they are, child, but you cannot for a moment class them with those whom we usually style 'the poor.'"

"No, mother, I cannot, for they are far worse off than these. Having been reared in affluence, with tenderer feelings and weaker muscles, as well as more delicate health, they are much less able to fight the battle of adversity than the lower poor, and I happen to know that the dear Misses Seaward are reduced just now to the very last extreme of poverty. But you have relieved them, mother."

"I, child! How!"

"The nursery screen that you bought yesterday by my advice was decorated by Jessie and Kate Seaward, so I thought it would be nice to let you see for yourself how sweet and 'deserving' are the poor people whom you have befriended!"

CHAPTER III.

INTRODUCES CONSTERNATION INTO A DELICATE HOUSEHOLD.

THE day following that on which Mrs. Dotropy and Ruth had gone out to visit "the poor," Jessie and Kate Seaward received a visit from a man who caused them no little anxiety—we might almost say alarm. He was a sea-captain of the name of Bream.

As this gentleman was rather eccentric, it may interest the reader to follow him from the commencement of the day on which we introduce him.

But first let it be stated that Captain Bream was a fine-looking man, though large and rugged. His upper lip and chin were bare, for he was in the habit of mowing those regions every morning with a blunt razor. To see Captain Bream go through this operation of mowing when at sea in a gale of wind was a sight that might have charmed the humorous, and horrified the nervous. The captain's shoulders were broad, and his bones big; his waistcoat, also, was large, his height six feet two, his voice a profound bass, and his manner boisterous

but hearty. He was apt to roar in conversation, but it was in a gale of wind that you should have heard him! In such circumstances, the celebrated bull of Bashan would have been constrained to retire from his presence with its tail between its legs. When we say that Captain Bream's eyes were kind eyes, and that the smile of his large mouth was a winning smile, we have sketched a full-length portrait of him,—or, as painters might put it, an "extra-full-length."

Well, when Captain Bream, having mown his chin, presented himself in public, on the morning of the particular day of which we write, he appeared to be in a meditative mood, and sauntered slowly, with the professional gait of a sailor, through several narrow streets near London Bridge. His hands were thrust into his coat-pockets, and a half humorous, half perplexed expression rested on his face. Evidently something troubled him, and he gave vent to a little of that something in deep tones, being apt to think aloud as he went along in disjointed sentences.

"Very odd," he murmured, "but that girl is always after some queer—well, no matter. It 's my business to—but it does puzzle me to guess why she should want me to live in such an out-o'-the-way—however, I suppose *she knows*, and that 's enough for me."

"Shine yer boots, sir?" said a small voice cutting short these broken remarks.

"What?"

"Shine yer boots, sir, an' p'raps I can 'elp yer to clear up yer mind w'en I'm a doin' of it."

It was the voice of a small shoeblack, whose eyes looked wistful.

The captain glanced at his boots; they wanted "shining" sadly, for the nautical valet who should have attended to such matters had neglected his duty that morning.

"Where d'ee live, my lad?" asked the captain, who, being large-hearted and having spent most of his life at sea, felt unusual interest in all things terrestrial when he chanced to be on shore.

"I live nowheres in partickler," answered the boy.

"But where d'ee sleep of a night?"

"Vell, that depends. Mostly anywheres."

"Got any father?"

"No, sir, I haint; nor yet no mother—never had no fathers or mothers, as I knows on an' wot's more, I don't want any. They're a chancey lot is fathers an' mothers—most of 'em. Better without 'em altogether, to my mind. Tother foot, sir."

Looking down with a benignant smile at this independent specimen of humanity, the captain obeyed orders.

"D'ee make much at this work now, my lad?" asked the captain.

"Not wery much, sir. Just about enough to keep soul an' body together, an' not always that. It was on'y last veek as I was starvin' to that extent that my soul very nigh broke out an' made his escape, but the doctor he got 'old of it by the tail an' 'eld on till 'e indooced it to stay on a bit longer. There you are, sir; might shave in 'em!"

"How much to pay?"

"Vell, gen'lemen usually gives me a penny, but that's in or'nary cases. Ven I has to shine boots like a pair o' ships' boats I looks for suthin' hextra —though I don't always get it!"

"There you are, my lad," said the captain, giving the boy something "hextra," which appeared to satisfy him. Thereafter he proceeded to the Bridge, and, embarking in one of the river steamers, was soon deposited at Pimlico. Thence, traversing St. George's Square, he soon found himself in the little street in which dwelt the Misses Seaward. He looked about him for some minutes and then entered a green-grocer's shop, crushing his hat against the top of the doorway.

Wishing the green-grocer good-morning he asked if lodgings were to be had in that neighbourhood.

"Well, yes, sir," he replied, "but I fear that

you'd find most of 'em rather small for a man of your size."

"No fear o' that," replied the captain with a loud guffaw, which roused the grocer's cat a little, "I'm used to small cabins, an' smaller bunks, d'ee see, an' can stow myself away easy in any sort of hole. Why, I've managed to snooze in a bunk only five foot four, by clewin' up my legs—though it wasn't comfortable. But it's not the size I care about so much as the character o' the landlady. I like tidy respectable people, you see—havin' bin always used to a well-kept ship."

"Ah! I know one who'll just suit you. Up at the other end o' the street. Two rooms kept by a young widow who—"

"Hold hard there," interrupted the captain; "none o' your young widows for me. They're dangerous. Besides, big as I am, I don't want *two* rooms to sleep in. If you know of any old maid, now, with *one* room—that's what would suit me to a tee; an easy-going sort o' woman, who—"

"I know of two elderly *ladies*," interrupted the green-grocer, thoughtfully; "they're sisters, and have got a small room to let; but—but—they're delicate sort o' creeters, you know; have seen better days, an' are raither timid, an' might want a female lodger, or a man who—who—"

"Out with it," interrupted the captain, "a man

who is soft-spoken and well-mannered—not a big noisy old sea-horse like me! Is that what you would say?"

"Just so," answered the green-grocer with an amiable nod.

"What's the name of the sisters?"

"Seaward."

"Seaward! eh!" exclaimed the captain in surprise, 'that's odd, now, that a seafarin' man should be sent to seaward for his lodgin's, even when he gets on shore. Ha! ha! I've always had a leanin' to seaward. I'll try the sisters. They can only tell me to 'bout ship, you know, and be off on the other tack."

And again the captain gave such boisterous vent to his mirth that the green-grocer's cat got up and walked indignantly away, for, albeit well used to the assaults of small boys, it apparently could not stand the noise of this new and bass disturber of the peace.

Having ascertained that the Misses Seaward dwelt above the shop in which he stood, Captain Bream went straight up-stairs and rapped heavily at their door.

Now, although the sisters had been gradually reduced to the extreme of poverty, they had hitherto struggled successfully against the necessity of performing what is known as the "dirty work" of a

house. By stinting themselves in food, working hard at anything they succeeded in getting to do, and mending and re-mending their garments until it became miraculous, even to themselves, how these managed to hang together, they had, up to that period in their history, managed to pay to a slender little girl, out of their slender means, a still more slender salary for coming night and morning to clean their grate, light their fire, carry out their ashes, brush their boots, wash their door-steps, and otherwise perform work for which the sisters were peculiarly unfitted by age, training, and taste. This girl's name was Liffie Lee. She was good as far as she went, but she did not go far. Her goodness was not the result of principle. She had no principle; did not know what the word meant, but she had a nature, and that nature was soft, unselfish, self-oblivious,—the last a blessing of incalculable price!

It was Liffie Lee who responded to Captain Bream's knock. She was at the time about to leave the house in undisturbed possession of its owners—or rather, occupiers.

"Does a Miss Seaward live here?"

It was a dark passage, and Liffie Lee almost quaked at the depth and metallic solemnity of the voice, as she glanced up at the spot where it appeared to come from.

"Yes, sir."

"May I see her?"

"I—I 'll see, sir, if you 'll wait outside, sir."

She gently yet quickly shut the door in the captain's face, and next moment appeared in the little parlour with a flushed face and widely open eyes.

The biggest man she had ever seen, or *heard*, she said, wanted to see Miss Seaward.

Why did he want to see her and what was his name?

She didn't know, and had omitted to ask his name, having been so frightened that she had left him at the door, which she had shut against him.

"An', please, Miss," continued Liffie, in a tone of suppressed eagerness, "if I was you I 'd lock the parlour door in case he bu'sts in the outer one. You might open the winder an' screech for the pleece."

"Oh! Liffie, what a frightened thing you are!" remonstrated Jessie, "go and show the man in at once."

"Oh! no, Miss," pleaded Liffie, "you 'd better 'ave 'im took up at once. You 've no notion what dreadful men that sort are. *I* know 'em well. We 've got some of 'em where *we* live, and—and they 're *awful!*"

Another knock at this point cut the conversation short, and Kate herself went to open the door.

"May I have a word with Miss Seaward?" asked the captain respectfully.

"Ye—es, certainly," answered Kate, with some hesitation, for, although reassured by the visitor's manner, his appearance and voice alarmed her too. She ushered him into the parlour, however, which was suddenly reduced to a mere bandbox by contrast with him.

Being politely asked to take a chair, he bowed and took hold of one, but on regarding its very slender proportions—it was a cane chair—he smiled and shook his head. The smile did much for him.

"Pray take this one," said Jessie, pointing to the old arm-chair, which was strong enough even for him, "our visitors are not usually such—such—"

"Thumping walruses! out with it, Miss Seaward," said the captain, seating himself—gently, for he had suffered in this matter more than once during his life—"I'm used to being found fault with for my size."

"Pray do not imagine," said Jessie, hastening to exculpate herself, "that I could be so very impolite as—as to—"

"Yes, yes, I know that," interrupted the captain, blowing his nose—and the familiar operation was in itself something awful in such a small room—"and I *am* too big, there's no doubt about that. However, it can't be helped. I must just grin and

bear it. But I came here on business, so we 'll have business first, and pleasure, if you like, afterwards."

"You may go now," said Kate at this point to Liffie Lee, who was still standing transfixed in open-mouthed amazement gazing at the visitor.

With native obedience and humility the child left the room, though anxious to see and hear more.

"You have a furnished room to let, I believe, ladies," said the captain, coming at once to the point.

Jessie and Kate glanced at each other. The latter felt a strong tendency to laugh, and the former replied :—

"We have, indeed, one small room—a very small room, in fact a mere closet with a window in the roof,—which we are very anxious to let if possible to a lady—a—female. It is very poorly furnished, but it is comfortable, and we would make it very cheap. Is it about the hiring of such a room that you come?"

"Yes, madam, it is," said the captain, decisively.

"But is the lady for whom you act," said Jessie, "prepared for a particularly small room, and *very* poorly furnished?"

"Yes, she is," replied the captain with a loud guffaw that made the very windows vibrate; "in fact *I* am the lady who wants the room. It 's true

I'm not very lady-like, but I can say for myself that I'll give you less trouble than many a lady would, an' I don't mind the cost."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Miss Seaward with a mingled look of amusement and perplexity which she did not attempt to conceal, while Kate laughed outright; "why, sir, the room is not much, if at all, longer than yourself."

"No matter," returned the captain, "I'm nowise particular, an' I've been recommended to come to you; so here I am, ready to strike a bargain if you're agreeable."

"Pray, may I ask who recommended you?" said Jessie.

The seaman looked perplexed for a moment.

"Well, I didn't observe his name over the door," he said, "but the man in the shop below recommended me."

"Oh! the green-grocer!" exclaimed both ladies together, but they did not add what they thought, namely, that the green-grocer was a very impertinent fellow to play off upon them what looked very much like a practical joke.

"Perhaps the best way to settle the matter," said Kate, "will be to show the gentleman our room. He will then understand the impossibility."

"That's right," exclaimed the captain, rising—and in doing so he seemed about to damage the

ceiling—"let's go below, by all means, and see the cabin."

"It is not down-stairs," remarked Jessie, leading the way; "we are at the top of the house here, and the room is on a level with this one."

"So much the better. I like a deck-cabin. In fact I've bin used to it aboard my last ship."

On being ushered into the room which he wished to hire, the sailor found himself in an apartment so very unsuited to his size and character that even he felt slightly troubled.

"It's not so much the size that bothers me," he said, stroking his chin gently, "as the fittings."

There was some ground for the seaman's perplexity, for the closet in which he stood, apart from the fact of its being only ten feet long by six broad, had been arranged by the tasteful sisters after the manner of a lady's boudoir, with a view to captivate some poor sister of very limited means, or, perhaps, some humble-minded and possibly undersized young clerk from the country. The bed, besides being rather small, and covered with a snow-white counterpane, was canopied with white muslin curtains lined with pink calico. The wash-hand-stand was low, fragile, and diminutive. The little deal table, which occupied an inconveniently large proportion of the space, was clothed in a garment similar to that of the bed. The one solitary chair

was of that cheap construction which is meant to creak warningly when sat upon by light people, and to resolve itself into matchwood when the desecrator is heavy. Two pictures graced the walls—one the infant Samuel in a rosewood frame, the other an oil painting—of probably the first century, for its subject was quite undistinguishable—in a gold slip. The latter was a relic of better days—a spared relic, which the public had refused to buy at any price, though the auctioneer had described it as a rare specimen of one of the old—the very old—masters, with Rembrandtesque proclivities. No chest of drawers obtruded itself in that small chamber, but instead thereof the economical yet provident sisters, foreseeing the importance of a retreat for garments, had supplied a deal box, of which they stuffed the lid and then covered the whole with green baize, thus causing it to serve the double purpose of a wardrobe and a small sofa.

"However," said Captain Bream, after a brief but careful look round, "it 'll do. With a little cuttin' and carvin' here an' there, we 'll manage to squeeze in, for you must know, ladies, that we seafarin' men have a wonderful knack o' stuffin' a good deal into small space."

The sisters made no reply. Indeed they were speechless, and horrified at the bare idea of the entrance of so huge a lodger into their quiet home.

"Look ye here, now," he continued in a comfortable, self-satisfied tone, as he expanded his great arms along the length of the bed to measure it, "the bunk 's about five foot eight inches long. Well, I 'm about six foot two in my socks—six inches short; that's a difficulty no doubt, but it's get-over-able this way, we 'll splice the green box to it."

He grasped the sofa-wardrobe as he spoke, and placed it to the foot of the bed, then embracing the entire mass of mattresses and bedding at the lower end, raised it up, thrust the green box under with his foot, and laid the bedding down on it—thus adding about eighteen inches to the length.

"There you are, d'ee see—quite long enough, an' a foot to spare."

"But it does not fit," urged Kate, who, becoming desperate, resolved to throw every possible obstruction in the way.

"That 's true, madam," returned the captain with an approving nod. "I see you 've got a mechanical eye—there 's a difference of elevation' 'tween the box and the bed of three inches or more, but bless you, that 's nothin' to speak of. If you 'd ever been in a gale o' wind at sea you 'd know that we sea-dogs are used to considerable difference of elevation between our heads an' feet. My top-coat stuffed in 'll put that to rights. But you 'll have to furl the flummery tops'ls—to lower 'em altogether would be safer."

He took hold of the muslin curtains with great tenderness as he spoke, fearing, apparently, to damage them.

"You see," he continued, apologetically, "I'm not used to this sort o' thing. Moreover, I've a tendency to nightmare. Don't alarm yourselves, ladies, I never do anything worse to disturb folk than give a shout or a yell or two, but occasionally I do let fly with a leg or an arm when the fit 's on me, an' if I should get entangled with this flummery, you know I 'd be apt to damage it. Yes, the safest way will be to douse the tops'ls altogether. As to the chair —well, I 'll supply a noo one that 'll stand rough weather. If you 'll also clear away the petticoats from the table it 'll do well enough. In regard to the lookin'-glass, I know pretty well what I 'm like, an' don't have any desire to study my portrait. As for shavin', I 've got a bull's-eye sort of glass in the lid o' my soap-box that serves all my purpose, and I shave wi' cold water, so I won't be botherin' you in the mornin's for hot. I've got a paintin' of my last ship—the *Daisy*—done in water-colours—it 's a pretty big 'un, but by hangin' Samuel on the other bulk-head, an' stickin' that black thing over the door, we can make room for it."

As Captain Bream ran on in this fashion, smoothing down all difficulties, and making everything comfortable, the poor sisters grew more and

more desperate, and Kate felt a tendency to recklessness coming on. Suddenly a happy thought occurred to her.

"But, sir," she interposed with much firmness of tone and manner, "there is one great difficulty in the way of our letting the room to you which I fear cannot be overcome."

The captain looked at her inquiringly, and Jessie regarded her with admiration and wonder, for she could not conceive what this insurmountable difficulty could be.

"My sister and I," continued Kate, "have both an *unconquerable* dislike to tobacco—"

"Oh! *that's* no objection," cried the captain with a light laugh—which in him, however, was an ear-splitting guffaw—"for I don't smoke!"

"Don't smoke?" repeated both sisters in tones of incredulity, for in their imagination a seaman who did not smoke seemed as great an impossibility as a street boy who did not whistle.

"An' what's more," continued the captain, "I don't drink. I'm a tee-total abstainer. I leave smokin' to steam-funnels, an' drinkin' to the fish."

"But," persisted Kate, on whom another happy thought had descended, "my sister and I keep very early hours, and a latch-key we could never—"

"Pooh! that's no difficulty," again interrupted this unconquerable man of the sea; "I hate late

hours myself, when I 'm ashore, havin' more than enough of 'em when afloat. I 'll go to bed regularly at nine o'clock, an' won't want a latch-key."

The idea of such a man going to bed at all was awesome enough, but the notion of his doing so in that small room, and in that delicately arranged little bed under that roof-tree, was so perplexing, that the sisters anxiously rummaged their minds for a new objection, but could find none until their visitor asked the rent of the room. Then Kate was assailed by another happy thought, and promptly named double the amount which she and Jessie had previously fixed as its value—which amount she felt sure would prove prohibitory.

Her dismay, then, may be imagined when the captain exclaimed with a sigh—perhaps it were better to say a breeze—of relief:—

"Well, then, that 's all comfortably settled. I consider the rent quite moderate. I 'll send up my chest to-morrow mornin', an' will turn up myself in the evenin'. I 'll bid ye good-day now, ladies, an' beg your pardon for keepin' you so long about this little matter."

He held out his hand. One after another the crushed sisters put their delicate little hands into the seaman's enormous paw, and meekly bade him good-bye, after which the nautical giant strode noisily out of the house, shut the door with an

inadvertent bang, stumbled heavily down the dark stair and passage, and finally vanished from the scene.

Then Jessie and Kate Seaward returned to their little parlour, sat down at opposite sides of the miniature grate, and gazed at each other for some minutes in solemn silence—both strongly impressed with the feeling that they had passed through a tremendous storm, and got suddenly into a profoundly dead calm.

CHAPTER IV.

BILLY BRIGHT THE FISHER-BOY VISITS LONDON—HAS A FIGHT—ENLARGES HIS MIND, AND UNDERTAKES BUSINESS.

WE must now return to the *Evening Star* fishing-smack, but only for a few minutes at present. Later on we shall have occasion to visit her under stirring circumstances. We saw her last heading eastward to her fishing-ground in the North Sea. We present her now, after a two months' trip, sailing to the west, homeward bound.

Eight weeks at sea; nine days on shore, is the unvarying routine of the North Sea smacksman's life, summer and winter, all the year round. Two months of toil and exposure of the severest kind, fair weather or foul, and little more than one week of repose in the bosom of his family—varied by visits more or less frequent to the tap-room of the public-house. It is a rugged life to body and soul. Severest toil and little rest for the one; strong temptation and little refreshment to the other.

"Strong temptation!" you exclaim, "what! out

on the heaving billows and among the howling gales of winter on the North Sea?"

Ay, stronger temptation than you might suppose, as, in the sequel, you shall see.

But we are homeward bound just now. One of the gales above referred to is blowing itself out, and the *Evening Star* is threading her way among the shoals to her brief repose in Yarmouth.

The crew are standing about the deck looking eagerly towards the land, and little Billy is steering.[1]

Yes, that ridiculous atom of humanity, with a rope, or "steering lanyard," round the tiller to prevent its knocking him down or sweeping him overboard, stands there guiding the plunging smack on her course through the dangerous shoals. Of course Billy's father has an eye on him, but he does not require to say more than an occasional word at long intervals.

Need we observe that our little hero is no longer subject to the demon which felled him at starting, and made his rosy face so pale? One glance at the healthy brown cheeks will settle that question. Another glance at his costume will suffice to explain, without words, much of Billy's life during the past eight weeks. The sou'-wester is crushed and soiled, the coat is limp, rent, mended, button-bereaved more or less, and bespattered, and the boots wear the aspect of having seen service. The little hands

[1] See Frontispiece.

too, which even while ashore were not particularly white, now bear traces of having had much to do with tar, and grease, and fishy substances, besides being red with cold, swelled with sundry bruises, and seamed with several scars—for Billy is reckless by nature, and it takes time and much experience of suffering to teach a man how to take care of his hands in the fisheries of the North Sea!

An hour or two more sufficed to carry our smack into port, and then the various members of the crew hurried home.

Billy swaggered beside his father and tried to look manly until he reached his own door, where all thought of personal appearance suddenly vanished, and he leaped with an unmanly squeal of delight into his mother's arms. You may be sure that those arms did not spare him!

"You 'll not go down to-night, David?" said Mrs. Bright, when, having half choked her son, she turned to her husband.

"No, lass,—I won't," said the skipper in a tone of decision.

Mrs. Bright was much gratified by the promise, for well did she know, from bitter experience, that if her David went down to meet his comrades at the public-house on his arrival, his brief holidays would probably be spent in a state of semi-intoxication. Indeed, even with this promise she knew

that much of his time and a good deal of his hardly earned money would be devoted to the publican.

"We 'll not have much of Billy's company this week, I fear," said Mrs. Bright, with a glance of pride at her son, who returned it with a look of surprise.

'Why so, Nell?" asked her husband.

"Because he has got to go to London."

"To Lun'on!" exclaimed the father.

"Lun'on!" echoed the son.

"Yes; it seems that Miss Ruth—that dear young lady, Miss Ruth Dotropy—you remember her, Billy?"

"Remember her! I should think I does," said the boy, emphatically, "if I was to live as long as Meethusilim I 'd never forget Miss Dotropy."

"Well," continued Mrs. Bright, "she wrote and asked Joe Davidson's wife to send her a fisher-boy to London for a day or two, and she 'd pay his railway fare up an' back, and all his expenses. What ever Miss Ruth wants to do with him I don't know, nor any one else. Mrs. Davidson couldn't find a boy that was fit to send, so she said she 'd wait till you came back, Billy, and send *you* up."

"Well, wonders ain't agoin' to cease yet a while," exclaimed Billy, with a look of gratified pride. "Hows'ever, I 'm game for anythink—from pitch an' toss up'ards. When am I to start, mother?"

"To-morrow, by the first train."

"All right—an' what sort o' rig? I couldn't go in them 'ere slops, you know. It wouldn't give 'em a k'rect idear o' Yarmouth boys, would it?"

"Of course not, sonny, an' I 've got ready your old Sunday coat, it ain't too small for you yet—an' some other things."

Accordingly, rigged out, as he expressed it, in a well-mended and brushed pilot-cloth coat; a round blue-cloth cap; a pair of trousers to match, and a pair of new shoes, Billy found himself speeding towards the great city with what he styled "a stiff breakfast under hatches, four or five shillings in the locker, an' a bu'stin' heart beneath his veskit."

In a few hours he found himself in the bewildering streets inquiring his way to the great square in the west end where Mrs. Dotropy dwelt.

The first person of whom he made inquiry was a street boy, and while he was speaking the city Arab regarded the provincial boy's innocent face—for it was a peculiarly innocent face when in repose—with a look of mingled curiosity and cunning.

"Now look 'ee here, young 'un," said the Arab, "I don't know nothink about the vest end squares, an' what's more I don't want to, but I do know a lot about the east end streets, an' if you 'll come with me, I 'll—"

"Thank 'ee, no," interrupted Billy, with unlooked-

for decision, "I 've got business to look arter at the *west* end."

"Vell, cooriously enough," returned the Arab, "I've got business at the *east* end. By the vay, you don't 'appen to 'ave any browns—any coppers —about you—eh?"

"Of course I has. You don't suppose a man goes cruisin' about Lun'on without any shot in the locker, do you?"

"To be sure not," responded the street boy; "I might 'ave know'd that a man like you wouldn't, anyhow. Now, it so 'appens that I 'm wery much in want o' change. You couldn't give me browns for a sixpence, could you?"

The Arab said this so earnestly—at the same time producing a sixpence, or something that looked like one, from his pockets—that the provincial boy's rising suspicions were quite disarmed.

"Let me see," he said, plunging his hand into his trousers pocket—"one, two, three—no, I 've only got fourpence, but—"

He was cut short by the Arab making a sudden grasp at the coins, which sent most of them spinning on the pavement.

Like lightning little Billy sprang forward and planted his right fist on the point of the Arab's nose with such vigour that the blow caused him to stagger backwards. Before he could recover Billy followed

him up with a left-hander on the forehead and a right-hander on the chest, which last sent him over on his back. So sudden was the onset that the passers-by scarcely understood what was occurring before it was all over. A grave policeman stepped forward at the moment. The Arab rose, glided into a whirl of wheels and horses' legs, and disappeared, while Billy stood still with doubled fists glaring defiance.

"Now then, my boy, what 's all this about?" said the man in blue, placing a large hand gently on the small shoulder.

"He 's bin and knocked my coppers about," said our little hero indignantly, as he looked up, but the stern yet kindly smile on the policeman's face restored him, and he condescended on a fuller explanation as he proceeded to pick up his pence.

Having been cautioned about the danger of entering into conversation with strangers in London—especially with street boys—Billy was directed to a Pimlico omnibus, and deposited not far from his destination. Inquiring his way thereafter of several policemen—who were, as he afterwards related to admiring friends, as thick in London as bloaters in Yarmouth—he found himself in front of the Dotropy residence.

"Yes, my little man," said the footman who opened the door of the west-end mansion, "Miss Ruth is at

'ome, and 'as been expecting you. Come this way."

That footman lost ground in Billy's estimation because of using the word *little*. If he had said "my boy," it would have been all right; "my man" would have been gratifying; but "my little man" was repulsive. A smart servant girl who chanced to see him on his way to the library also caused him much pain by whispering to her fellow something about a sweet innocent-faced darling, and he put on a savage frown, as he was ushered into the room, by way of counteracting the sweet innocence. A glass opposite suddenly revealed to its owner the smooth rosy-brown visage, screwed up in a compound expression. That expression changed so swiftly to sheer surprise that a burst of involuntary laughter was the result. A deep flush, and silence, followed, as the urchin looked with some confusion round the room to see if he had been observed or overheard, and a sense of relief came as he found that he was alone. No one had seen or heard him except some of the Dotropy ancestors who had "come over" with the Conqueror, and who gazed sternly from the walls. For, you see, being a family of note, the dining room could not hold all the ancestors, so that some of them had to be accommodated in the library.

That glance round had a powerful effect on the

mind of the fisher-boy, so powerful indeed that all thought of self vanished, for he found himself for the first time in a room the like of which he had never seen, or heard, or dreamed of.

He knew, of course, that there were libraries in Yarmouth, and was aware that they had something to do with books, but he had never seen a collection on a large scale, and, up to that time, had no particular curiosity about books.

Indeed, if truth must be told, Billy hated books, because the only point in regard to which he and his mother had ever differed was a book! A tattered, ragged, much-soiled book it was, with big letters at the beginning, simple arrangements of letters in the middle, and maddening compounds of them towards the end. Earnestly, patiently, lovingly, yet perseveringly, had Mrs. Bright tried to drill the contents of that book into Billy's unwilling brain, but with little success, for, albeit a willing and obliging child, there was a limit to his powers of comprehension, and a tendency in his young mind to hold in contempt what he did not understand.

One day a somewhat pedantic visitor told Billy that he would never be a great man if he did not try to understand the book in question—to thoroughly digest it.

"You hear what the gentleman says, Billy, you dirty little gurnet," said David Bright on that

occasion, "you 've got to di-gest it, my lad, to di-gest it."

"Yes, father," said Billy, with a finger in his mouth and his eyes on the visitor.

The boy's mind was inquisitive and ingenious. He pestered his father, after the visitor had gone, for an explanation as to what he meant by digesting the book.

"Why, sonny," returned David, knitting his brows very hard, for the question was somewhat of a puzzler, "he means that you 've got to stow away in your brain the knowledge that 's in the book, an' work away at it—di-gest it, d'ee see—same as you stow grub into yer stummick an' digest that."

Billy pondered this a long time till a happy thought occurred to him.

"*I'll* digest it," said he, slapping his thigh one day when he was left alone in the house. "We'll all di-gest it together!"

He jumped up, took the lid off a pot of pea-soup that was boiling on the fire, and dropped the hated book into it.

"What 's this i' the soup, Nell?" said David that day at dinner, as he fished a mass of curious substance out of the pot. "Many a queer thing have I fished up i' the trawl from the bottom o' the North Sea, but ne'er afore did I make such a haul as this in a pot o' pea-soup. What is 't?"

"Why, David," replied the wife, examining the substance with a puzzled expression, "I do believe it's the primer!"

They both turned their eyes inquiringly on the boy, who sat gravely watching them.

"All right, father," he said, "I put 'im in. We're a-goin' to di-gest it, you know."

"Dirty boy!" exclaimed his mother, flinging the remains of the boiled book under the grate. "You've ruined the soup."

"Never a bit, Nell," said the skipper, who was in no wise particular as to his food, "clean paper an' print can't do no damage to the soup. An' after all, I don't see why a man shouldn't take in knowledge as well through the stummick as through the brain. It don't matter a roker's tail whether you ship cargo through the main-hatch or through the fore-hatch, so long as it gits inside somehow. Come, let's have a bowl of it. I never was good at letters myself, an' I'll be bound to say that Billy and I will di-gest the book better this way than the right way."

Thus was the finishing touch put to Billy Bright's education at that time, and we have described the incident in order that the reader may fully understand the condition of the boy's mind as he stood gazing round the library of the west-end mansion.

"Books!" exclaimed Billy, afterwards, when questioned by a Yarmouth friend, "I should just

think there *was* books. Oh! it 's o' no manner o' use tryin' to tell 'ee about it. There was books from the floor to the ceilin' all round the room—books in red covers, an' blue covers, an' green, an' yellow, an' pink, an' white—all the colours in the rainbow, and all of 'em more or less kivered wi' gold—w'y—I don't know what their insides was worth, but sartin sure am I that they couldn't come up to their outsides. Mints of money must 'ave bin spent in kiverin' of 'em. An' there was ladders to git at 'em—a short un to git at the books below, an' a long un to go aloft for 'em in the top rows. What people finds to write about beats me to understand; but who ever buys and reads it all beats me wuss."

While new and puzzling thoughts were thus chasing each other through the fisher-boy's brain Ruth Dotropy entered.

"What! Billy Bright," she exclaimed in a tone of great satisfaction, hurrying forward and holding out her hand. "I'm so glad they have sent *you*. I would have asked them to send you, when I wrote, but thought you were at sea."

"Yes, Miss, but I 've got back again," said Billy, grasping the offered hand timidly, fearing to soil it.

For the same reason he sat down carefully on the edge of a chair, when Ruth said heartily, "Come, sit down and let 's have a talk together," for, you

see, he had become so accustomed to fishy clothes and tarred hands that he had a tendency to forget that he was now "clean" and "in a split-new rig."

Ruth's manner and reception put the poor boy at once at his ease. For some time she plied him with questions about the fisher-folk of Yarmouth and Gorleston, in whom she had taken great interest during a summer spent at the former town,—at which time she had made the acquaintance of little Billy. Then she began to talk of the sea and the fishery, and the smacks with their crews. Of course the boy was in his element on these subjects, and not only answered his fair questioner fully, but volunteered a number of anecdotes, and a vast amount of interesting information about fishing, which quite charmed Ruth, inducing her to encourage him to go on.

"Oh! yes, Miss," he said, "it 's quite true what you 've bin told. There 's hundreds and hundreds of smacks afishin' out there on the North Sea all the year round, summer an' winter. In course I can't say whether there 's a popilation, as you calls it, of over twelve thousand, always afloat, never havin' counted 'em myself, but I know there must be a-many thousand men an' boys there."[1]

[1] Billy was right. There is really a population of over 12,000 men and boys afloat all the year round on the North Sea, engaged in the arduous work of daily supplying the London and other markets with fresh fish.

"And what port do they run for when a storm comes on?" asked Ruth.

"What port, Miss? why, they don't run for no port at all, cos why? there 's no port near enough to run for."

"Do you mean to say, that they remain at sea during all the storms—even the worst?"

"That 's just what we does, Miss. Blow high, blow low, it 's all the same; we must weather it the best way we can. An' you should see how it blows in winter! That 's the time we catches it wust. It 's so cold too! I 've not bin out in winter yet, myself, but father says it 's cold enough to freeze the nose off your face, an' it blows 'ard enough a'most to blow you inside out. You wouldn't like to face that sort o' thing—would you, Miss?"

With a light laugh Ruth admitted that she disliked the idea of such North Sea experiences.

"Oh! you 've no idea, Miss, how it do blow sometimes," continued Billy, who was a naturally communicative boy, and felt that he had got hold of a sympathetic ear. "Have you ever heard of the gale that blew so 'ard that they had to station two men an' a boy to hold on to the captain's hair for fear it should be blowed right off his 'ead?"

"Yes," answered Ruth, with a silvery laugh "I 've heard of that gale."

"Have you, Miss?" said Billy with a slightly sur-

prised look. "That 's queer, now. I thought nobody know'd o' that gale 'cept us o' the North Sea, an', p'raps, some o' the people o' Yarmouth an' Gorleston."

"I rather think that I must have read of it somewhere," said Ruth. Billy glanced reproachfully at the surrounding books, under the impression that it must have been one of these which had taken the wind out of his sails.

"Well, Miss," he continued, "I don't mean for to say I ever was in a gale that obliged us to be careful of the skipper's hair, but I do say that father 's seed somethink like it, for many a time our smack has bin blowed over on her beam-ends—that means laid a'most flat, Miss, with 'er sails on the sea. One night father's smack was sailin' along close-hauled when a heavy sea struck 'er abaft the channels and filled the bag o' the mains'l. She was just risin' to clear herself when another sea follared, filled the mains'l again, an' sent 'er on 'er beam-ends. The sea was makin' a clean breach over 'er from stem to stern, an' cleared the deck o' the boat an' gear an' everythink. Down went all hands b'low an' shut the companion, to prevent 'er being swamped. Meanwhile the weight o' water bu'st the mains'l, so that the vessel partly righted an' let the hands come on deck agin. Then, arter the gale had eased a bit, two or three o' their comrades bore down on 'em and towed 'em round, so as the wind got under 'er

an' lifted 'er a bit, but the ballast had bin shot from the bilge into the side, so they couldn't right her altogether, but had to tow 'er into port that way—over two hundred miles—the snow an' hail blowin', too, like one o'clock!"

"Really, they must have had a terrible time of it," returned Ruth, "though I don't know exactly how dreadful 'one o'clock' may be. But tell me, Billy, do the fishermen like the worsted mitts and helmets and comforters that were sent to them from this house last year?"

"Oh! don't they, just! I've heard father blessin' the ladies as sent 'em many a time. You see, Miss, the oil-skins chafe our wrists most awful when we're workin' of the gear—"

"What is the gear, Billy?"

"The nets, Miss, an' all the tackle as belongs to 'em. An' then the salt water makes the sores wuss—it used to be quite awful, but the cuffs keeps us all right. An' the books an' tracts, too, Miss—the hands are wery fond o' them, an'—"

"We will talk about the books and tracts another time," said Ruth, interrupting, "but just now we must proceed to business. Of course you understand that I must have some object in view in sending for a fisher-boy from Yarmouth."

"Well, Miss, it did occur to me that I wasn't axed to come here for nuffin'."

"Just so, my boy. Now I want your help, so I will explain. We are to have what is called a drawing-room meeting here in a few days, in behalf of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, and one of your fisher captains is to be present to give an account of the work carried on among the men of the fleet by the mission vessels. So I want you to be there as one of the boys—"

"Not to speak to 'em, Miss, I hope?" said Billy, with a look of affected modesty.

"No, not to speak," replied Ruth, laughing, "only to represent the boys of the fleet. But that 's not the main thing I want you for. It is this, and remember, Billy, that I am now taking you into my confidence, so you must not tell what I shall speak to you about to any living soul."

"Not even to mother?" asked the boy.

"No, not even—well, you *may* tell it to your mother, for boys ought to have no secrets from their mothers; besides, *your* mother is a discreet woman, and lives a long way off from London. You must know, then, Billy, that I have two very dear friends—two ladies—who are in deep poverty, and I want to give them money—"

"Well, why don't you give it 'em, Miss?" said Billy, seeing that Ruth hesitated. "You must have lots of it to give away," he added, looking contemplatively round.

"Yes, thank God who gave it to me, I have, as

you say, lots of it, but I cannot give it to the dear ladies I speak of because—because—"

"They're too proud to take it, p'raps," suggested Billy.

"No; they are not proud—very far from it; but they are sensitive."

"What's that, Miss?"

Ruth was puzzled for a reply.

"It—it means," she said, "that they have delicate feelings, which cannot bear the idea of accepting money without working for it, when there are so many millions of poor people without money who *cannot* work for it. They once said to me, indeed, that if they were to accept money in charity they would feel as if they were robbing the really poor."

"Why don't they work, then?" asked Billy in some surprise. "Why don't they go to sea as stooardesses or somethink o' that sort?"

"Because they have never been trained to such work, or, indeed, to any particular work," returned Ruth; "moreover, they are in rather delicate health, and are not young. Their father was rich, and meant to leave them plenty to live on, but he failed, and left them in broken health without a penny. Wasn't it sad?"

"Indeed it was, Miss," replied the boy, whose ready sympathy was easily enlisted.

"Well, now, Billy, I want you to go to see these ladies. Tell them that you are a fisher-boy belong-

ing to the North-sea trawling fleet, and that you have called from a house which wants a job undertaken. You will then explain about the fishery, and how the wrists of the men are chafed, and break out into painful sores, and how worsted mitts serve the purpose at once of prevention and cure. Say that the house by which you have been sent has many hands at work—and so I have, Billy, for many ladies send the cuffs and things made by them for the fleet to *me* to be forwarded, only they work gratuitously, and I want the work done by my two friends to be paid for, you understand? Tell them that still more hands are wanted, and ask them if they are open to an engagement. You must be very matter-of-fact, grave, and business-like, you know. Ask them how many pairs they think they will be able to make in a week, and say that the price to be paid will be fixed on receipt of the first sample. But, remember, on no account are you to mention the name of the house that sent you; you will also leave with them this bag of worsted. Now, do you fully understand?"

Billy replied by a decided wink, coupled with an intelligent nod.

After a good deal of further advice and explanation, Ruth gave Billy the name and address of her friends, and sent him forth on his mission.

CHAPTER V.

HOW BILLY CONDUCTS THE BUSINESS—HOW CAPTAIN BREAM OVERCOMES THE SISTERS, AND HOW JESSIE SEAWARD SEES MYSTERY IN EVERYTHING.

"I WONDER," said Billy to himself on reaching the street as he looked down at the legs of his trousers, "I wonder if they're any shorter. Yes, they don't seem to be quite so far down on the shoes as when I left Yarmouth. I *must* have grow'd an inch or two since I came up to Lon'on!"

Under this gratifying impression the fisher-boy drew himself up to his full height, his little chest swelling with new sensations, and his whole body rolling along with a nautical swagger that drew on him the admiration of some, the contempt of others, and caused several street boys to ask "if his mother knowed 'e was hout," and other insolent questions.

But Billy cared for none of these things. The provincial boy was quite equal to the occasion, though his return "chaff" smacked much of salt water.

Arrived at the poverty-stricken street in which the Misses Seaward dwelt, Billy mounted the

narrow staircase and knocked at the door. It was opened by Liffie Lee, who had remained on that day to accomplish some extra work.

"Is your missis at home, my dear?"

"There ain't no missis here, an' I ain't *your* dear,' was the prompt reply.

Billy was taken aback. He had not anticipated so ready and caustic a response in one so small and child-like.

"Come now—no offence meant," he said, "but you're not a-goin' to deny that the Miss Seawards does live here."

"I ain't a-goin' to deny nothink," replied Liffie, a little softened by the boy's apologetic tone, "only when I'm expected to give a civil answer, I expects a civil question."

"That's all fair an' aboveboard. Now, will you tell the Miss Seawards I wants to see 'em, on a matter of business—of importance."

Another minute and Billy stood in the presence of the ladies he wished to see. Prepared beforehand to like them, his affections were at once fixed for ever by the first glimpse of their kindly faces.

With a matter-of-fact gravity, that greatly amused the sisters—though they carefully concealed their feelings—little Billy stated his business, and, in so doing, threw his auditors into a flutter of hope and gratitude, surprise and perplexity.

"But what is the name of the house that sends you?" asked Miss Jessie.

"That I am not allowed for to tell," said the boy-of-business, firmly.

"A mercantile house in the city, I suppose," said Kate.

"What sort o' house it may be is more than a sea-farin' man like me knows, an' of course it 's in the city. You wouldn't expect a business-house to be in the country, would you? all I know is that they want mitts made—hundreds of 'em—no end o' mitts—an' they hain't got hands enough to make 'em, so they sent me to ask if you 'll undertake to help in the work, or if they 're to git some one else to do it. Now, will you, or will you not? that 's the pint."

"Of course we shall be only too happy," answered Jessie, "though the application is strange. How did you come to know that we were in want of—that is, who sent you to us?"

"The house sent me, as I said afore, Miss."

"Yes, but how did the house come to know of our existence, and how is it that a house of any sort should send a sailor-boy as its messenger?"

"How the house came to know of you is more than I can say. They don't tell me all the outs-an'-ins of their affairs, you know. As to a house sendin' a sailor-boy as its messenger—did you ever hear of

the great house of Messrs. Hewett and Co. what supplies Billin'sgate with fish?"

"I'm not sure—well, yes, I think I have heard of that house," said Kate, "though we are not in the way of hearing much about the commercial houses of London."

"Well," continued Billy, "that house sends hundreds of fisher-boys as messengers. It sends 'em to the deep sea with a message to the fish, an' the message is—'come out o' the water you skulkin' critters, an' be sent up to Billin'sgate to be sold an' eaten!' The fish don't come willin'ly, I'm bound for to say that, but we make 'em come all the same, willin' or not, for we 've wonderful powers o' persuasion. So you see, houses *do* send fisher-boys as messengers sometimes; now, what am I to say to the partikler house as sends *me?* will you go in for mitts? you may take comforters if you prefer it, or helmets."

"What do you mean by helmets, my boy?"

"Worsted ones, of course. Things made to kiver up a man's head and neck and come down to his shoulders, with a hole in front just big enough to let his eyes, nose, and cheek-bones come through. With a sou'-wester on top, and a comforter round the neck, they 're not so bad in a stiff nor'-wester in Janoowairy. Now 's your chance, ladies, now, or niver!"

There was something so ludicrous in the manly tone and decided manner of the smooth-faced little creature before them, that the sisters burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Forgive us, dear boy, but the idea of our being asked in this sudden way to make innumerable mitts and comforters and worsted helmets seems so odd that we can't help laughing. What is your name? That is not a secret, I hope?"

"By no means. My name is Billy Bright. If you 're very partikler, you may call me Willum."

"I prefer Billy," said Kate. "Now, Billy, it is near our dinner hour. Will you stay and dine with us? If you do, you 'll meet such a nice man—such a big man too—and somewhat in your own line of life; a sea captain. We expect him every—"

"No, thank 'ee, Miss," interrupted the boy, rising abruptly. "I sees more than enough o' big sea-captings when I 'm afloat. Besides, I 've got more business on hand, so I 'll bid 'ee good-day."

Pulling his forelock he left the room.

"The ladies has undertook some work for me, my dear," said Billy to Liffie Lee, as he stood at the door buttoning up his little coat, "so p'raps I may see you again."

"It won't break my 'art if you don't," replied Liffie; "no, nor yet yours."

"Speak for yourself, young 'ooman. You don't know nothing about *my* 'art."

As he spoke, a heavy foot was heard at the bottom of the stair.

"That's our lodger," said Liffie; "no foot but his can bang the stair or make it creak like that."

"Well, I 'm off," cried Billy, descending two steps at a time.

Half-way down he encountered what seemed to him a giant with a chest on his shoulder. It was the darkest part of the stair where they met.

"Look out ahead! Hard a starboard!" growled Captain Bream, who seemed to be heavily weighted.

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried Billy, as he brushed past, bounded into the street, and swaggered away.

"What boy was that, Liffie?" asked the captain, letting down the chest he carried with a shock that caused the frail tenement to quiver from cellar to roof-tree.

"I don't know, sir."

"He must be a sailor-boy, from his answer," rejoined the captain. "Open the door o' my cabin, lass, and I 'll carry it right in. It's somewhat heavy."

He lifted the chest, which was within an eighth of an inch of being too large to pass through the little doorway, and put it in a corner, after which he entered the parlour, and sat down in a solid wooden

chair which he had supplied to the establishment for his own special use.

"You see," he had said, on the day when he introduced it, "I've come to grief so often in the matter of chairs that I've become chairy as to how I use 'em. If all the chairs that I've had go crash under me was put together they'd furnish a good-sized house. Look before you leap is a well-known proverb, but look before you sit down has become a more familiar experience to me through life. It's an awkward thing bein' so heavy, and I hope you'll never know what it is, ladies."

Judging from their appearance just then there did not seem much prospect of that!

"Now," continued the captain, rubbing his hands and looking benignantly at Jessie, "I have settled the matter at last; fairly said good-bye to old Ocean, an' fixed to cast anchor for good on the land."

"Have you indeed, captain?" said Jessie, "I should fancy that you must feel rather sorry to bid farewell to so old a friend."

"That's true, Miss Seaward. An old and good friend the sea has been to me, thank God. But I'm gettin' too old myself to be much of a friend to *it*, so I've fixed to say good-bye. And the question is, Am I to stop on here, or am I to look out for another lodgin'? You see I've been a good many weeks with you now, an' you've had a fair taste of

me, so to speak. I know I'm a rough sort o' fish for the like o' you to have to do with, and, like some o' the hermit crabs, rather too big for my shell, so if you find me awkward or uncomfortable don't hesitate to say so. I won't be surprised, though I confess I should be sorry to leave you."

"Well, Captain Bream," said Kate, who was generally the speaker when delicate, difficult, or unpleasant subjects had to be dealt with, "since you have been so candid with us we will be equally candid with you. When you first came to us, I confess that we were much alarmed; you seemed so very big" (the captain tried to shrink a little—without success—and smiled in a deprecating manner), "and our rooms and furniture seemed so very small and delicate, so to speak; and then your voice was so fearfully deep and gruff" (the captain cleared his throat softly—in B natural of the bass clef—and smiled again), "that we were almost frightened to receive you; but, now that we have had experience of you, we are quite willing that you should continue with us—on one condition, however."

"And that is?" asked the captain anxiously.

"That you pay us a lower rent."

"A—a higher rent you mean, I suppose?"

"No; I mean a lower."

Captain Bream's benign visage became grave and elongated.

"You see, captain," continued Kate, flushing a little, "when you first came, we tried—excuse me—to get rid of you, to shake you off, and we almost doubled the rent of our little room, hoping that—"

"Quite right, quite right," interrupted the captain, "and according to strict justice, for ain't I almost double the size of or'nary men, an' don't I give more than double the trouble?"

"Not so," returned Kate, firmly, "you don't give half the trouble that other men do."

"Excuse me, Miss Kate," said the captain with a twinkle in his grey eye, "you told me I was your first lodger, so how can you know how much trouble other men would give?"

"No matter," persisted Kate, a little confused, "you don't give *half* the trouble that other lodgers would have given if we had had them."

"Ah! h'm—well," returned the captain softly, in the profoundest possible bass, "looking at the matter in that light, perhaps you are not far wrong. But, go on."

"Well, I have only to add," continued Kate, "that you have been so kind to us, and so considerate, and have given us so little—so *very* little trouble, that it will give us both great pleasure to have you continue to lodge with us if you agree to the reduction of the rent."

"Very well," said Captain Bream, pulling out an immense gold chronometer—the gift, in days gone by, of a band of highly grateful and appreciative passengers. "I've got business in the city an hour hence. We shall have dinner first. Two hours afterwards I will return with a cab and take away my boxes. That will give you plenty of time to make out your little bill and—"

"What *do* you mean, captain?" interrupted Kate, in much surprise.

"I mean, dear ladies, that you and I entered into an agreement to rent your little cabin for so much. Now it has been my rule in life to stick to agreements, and I mean to stick to this one or throw up my situation. Besides, I'm not goin' to submit to have the half of my rent cut off. I can't stand it. Like old Shylock, I mean to stick to the letter of the bond. Now, is it 'to be, or not to be?' as Hamlet said to the ass."

"I was not aware that Hamlet said that to an ass," remarked Jessie, with a little laugh.

"Oh yes! he did," returned the captain quite confidently; "he said it to himself, you know, an' that was the same thing. But what about the agreement?"

"Well, since you are so determined, I suppose we must give in," said Kate.

"We can't resist you, captain," said Jessie, "but there is one thing that we must positively insist on, namely, that you come and sit in this room of an evening. I suppose you read or write a great deal, for we see your light burning very late sometimes, and as you have no fire you must often feel very cold."

"Cold!" shouted the captain, with a laugh that caused the very window-frames to vibrate. "My dear ladies, I'm never cold. Got so used to it, I suppose, that it has no power over me. Why, when a man o' my size gets heated right through, it takes three or four hours to cool him even a little. Besides, if it do come a very sharp frost, I've got a bear-skin coat that our ship-carpenter made for me one voyage in the arctic regions. It is hot enough inside almost to cook you. Did I ever show it you? I'll fetch it."

Captain Bream rose with such energy that he unintentionally spurned his chair—his own solid peculiar chair—and caused it to pirouette on one leg before tumbling backward with a crash. Next minute he returned enveloped from head to foot in what might be termed a white-bear ulster, with an enormous hood at the back of his neck.

Accustomed as the sisters were to their lodger's bulk, they were not prepared for the marvellous increase caused by the monstrous hairy garment.

"It would puzzle the cold to get at me through this, wouldn't it?" said its owner, surveying it with complacency. "It was my own invention too—at least the carpenter and I concocted it between us. The sleeves are closed up at the ends, you see, and a thumb attached to each, so as to make sleeves and mittens all of a piece, with a slit near the wrists to let you shove your hands out when you want to use them naked, an' a flap to cover the slit and keep the wind out when you don't want to shove out your hands. Then the hood, you see, is large and easy, so that it can be pulled well for'ard—so—and this broad band behind it unbuttons and comes round in front of the face and buttons, so—to keep all snug when you lay down to sleep."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the sisters as the captain stood before them like a great pillar of white fur, with nothing of him visible save the eyes and feet.

"But that 's not all," continued the ancient mariner, turning his back to the sisters. "You see that great flap hooked up behind?"

"Yes," answered Jessie and Kate in the same breath. "Well, then, notice what I do."

He sat down on the floor, and unhooking the flap, drew it round in front, where he re-hooked it to another row of eyes in such a manner that it completely covered his feet and lower limbs.

"There, you see, I'm in a regular fur-bag now, all ready for a night in the snow."

By way of illustration he extended himself on the floor at full length, and, by reason of that length being so great, and the room so narrow, his feet went into the window-recess while his head lay near the door.

All ignorant of this illustration of arctic life going on, Liffie Lee, intent on dinner purposes, opened the door and drove it violently against the captain's head.

"Avast there!" he shouted, rising promptly. "Come in, lass. Come in—no damage done."

"Oh! sir," exclaimed the horrified Liffie, "I ax your parding."

"Don't put yourself about, my girl. I'm used to collisions, and it's not in the power o' your small carcass to do me damage."

Disrobing himself as he spoke, the lodger retired to his cabin to lay aside his curious garment, and Liffie, assisted by Kate, took advantage of his absence to spread their little board.

"I never saw such a man," said Kate in a low voice as she bustled about.

"Saw!" exclaimed Jessie under her breath, "I never even conceived of such a man. He is so violent in his actions that I constantly feel as if I should be run over and killed. It feels like living

in the same house with a runaway mail coach. How fortunate that his spirit is so gentle and kind!"

A tremendous crash at that moment caused Jessie to stop with a gasp.

"Hallo! fetch a swab—a dishclout or somethin', Liffie," came thundering from the captain's room. "Don't be alarmed, ladies, it's only the wash-hand basin. Knocked it over in hangin' up the coat. Nothin' smashed. It's a tin basin, you know. Look alive, lass, else the water'll git down below, for the caulkin' of these planks ain't much to boast of, an' you'll have the green-grocer up in a towering rage!"

A few minutes later this curious trio sat down to dinner, and the captain, according to a custom established from the commencement of his sojourn, asked a blessing on the meal, in few words, but with a deeply reverent manner, his great hands being clasped before him, and with his eyes shut like a little child.

"Well now, before beginning," he said, looking up, "let me understand; is this matter of the lodging and rent settled?"

"Yes, it is settled," answered Jessie. "We've got used to you, captain, and should be very very sorry to lose you."

"Come, that's all right. Let's shake hands on it over the leg of mutton."

He extended his long arm over the small table, and spread out his enormous palm in front of Jessie Seaward. With an amused laugh she laid her little hand in it—to grasp it was out of the question—and the mighty palm closed for a moment with an affectionate squeeze. The same ceremony having been gone through with Kate, he proceeded to carve.

And what a difference between the dinners that once graced—perhaps we should say *dis*graced—that board, and those that smoked upon it now! Then, tea and toast, with sometimes an egg, and occasionally a bit of bacon, were the light viands; now, beef, mutton, peas, greens, potatoes, and other things constituted the heavy fare.

The sisters had already begun to get stronger on it. The captain would have got stronger, no doubt, had that been possible.

And what a satisfactory thing it was to watch Captain Bream at his meals! There was something grand—absolutely majestic—in his action. Being a profoundly modest and unselfish man it was not possible to associate the idea of gluttony with him, though he possessed the digestion of an ostrich, and the appetite of a shark. There was nothing hurried, or eager, or careless, in his mode of eating. His motions were rather slow than otherwise; his proceedings deliberate. He would

even at times check a tempting morsel on its way to his mouth that he might more thoroughly understand and appreciate something that Jessie or Kate chanced to be telling him. Yet with all that he compelled you, while looking at him, to whisper to yourself—"how he does shovel it in!"

"I declare to you, Kate," said Jessie, on one occasion after the captain had left the room, "I saw him take one bite to-day which ought to have choked him, but it didn't. He stuck his fork into a piece of mutton as big—oh! I'm afraid to say how big; it really seemed to me the size of your hand, and he piled quite a little mound of green peas on it, with a great mass of broken fragments and gravy, and put it all into his mouth at once, though that mouth was already pretty well filled with the larger half of an enormous potato. I thought he would never get it in, but something you said caused him to laugh at the time, and before the laugh was over the bite had disappeared. Before it was properly swallowed he was helping himself to another slice from the leg of mutton! I declare to you, Kate, that many a time I have dined altogether on less than that one bite!"

Poor Miss Seaward had stated a simple truth in regard to herself, but that truth was founded on want of food, not on want of appetite or capacity for more.

At first it had been arranged that an account-book should be kept, and that the captain should pay for one-third of the food that was consumed in the house, but he had consumed so much, and the sisters so ridiculously little, that he refused to fall in with such an arrangement, and insisted on paying for all the food consumed, with the exception of the cup of coffee, cream, and sugar, with which he regaled himself every day after dinner. Of course they had had a battle over this matter also, but the captain had carried the day, as he usually did, for he had marvellous powers of suasion. He had indeed so argued, and talked, and bamboozled the meek sisters—sometimes seriously, oftener jocularly,—that they had almost been brought to the belief that somehow or other their lodger was only doing what was just! After all, they were not so far wrong, for all that they ate of the captain's provisions amounted to a mere drop in the bucket, while the intellectual food with which they plied their lodger in return, and the wealth of sympathy with which they surrounded him, was far beyond the power of gold to purchase.

"No," said Captain Bream, sipping his coffee and shaking his head, when Jessie again pressed on him the propriety of sitting in the parlour of an evening, "I can't do it. The fact is that I'm studying—though you may think I'm rather an oldish

student—and I can't study except when I'm alone."

"What are you studying?" asked Kate, and then, observing that the captain looked slightly confused, and feeling that she ought not to have put the question, she quickly changed the subject by adding—"for whatever it is, you will be quite free from interruption here. My sister and I often sit for hours without talking, and—"

"No, no, dear Miss Kate. Say no more," interrupted the captain; "I must stick to my own cabin except at meal-times, and, of course, when we want a bit of a talk together. There is one thing, however, that I would like. I know you have family worship with your little lass. May I join you?"

"Oh! it would give us such pleasure," exclaimed Kate, eagerly, "if you would come and conduct worship for us."

The captain protested that he would not do that, but finally gave in, and afterwards acted the part of chaplain in the family.

"By the way," he said, when about to quit the parlour, "I've brought another chest to the house."

"Yes," said Kate, "we felt the shock when you put it down."

"Well, it is a bit heavy. I've fairly given up my connection with my last ship, and as the new commander took possession this morning I

was obliged to bring away my last box. Now, I don't want Liffie to move it about when putting things to rights, or to meddle with it in any way. When we want to sweep behind or under it I'll shift it myself. But, after all, you're safe not to move it, for the three of you together couldn't if you were to try ever so much. So, good-day. I'll be back to tea."

"Kate," said Jessie, after he was gone, "I am quite sure that there is some mystery connected with that box."

"Of course you are," replied Kate, with a laugh, "you always see mystery in things that you don't understand! You saw mystery too, didn't you, in the late sitting up and studies of Captain Bream."

"Indeed I did, and I am quite sure that there *is* some mystery about that too."

"Just so, and I have no doubt that you observe mystery of some sort," added Kate, with a humorous glance, "in the order for worsted work that we have just received."

"Undoubtedly I do," replied Jessie, with decision. "The whole affair is mysterious—ridiculously so. In truth it seems to me that we are surrounded by mystery."

"Well, well, sister mine," said the matter-of-fact Kate, going to a small cupboard and producing an

ample work-box that served for both, "whatever mysteries may surround us, it is our business to fulfil our engagements, so we will at once begin our knitting of cuffs and comforters for the fishermen of the North Sea."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CURSE OF THE NORTH SEA; AND THE TRAWLS AT WORK.

THERE are few objects in nature, we think, more soothing to the feelings and at the same time more heart-stirring to the soul than the wide ocean in a profound calm, when sky and temperature, health, hour, and other surrounding conditions combine to produce unison of the entire being.

Such were the conditions, one lovely morning about the end of summer, which gladdened the heart of little Billy Bright, as he leaned over the side of the *Evening Star*, and made faces at his own reflected image in the sea, while he softly whistled a slow melody to which the gentle swell beat time.

The *Evening Star* was at that time the centre of a constellation—if we may so call it—of fishing smacks, which floated in hundreds around her. It was the "Short Blue" fleet of deep-sea trawlers; so named because of the short square flag of blue by which it was distinguished from other deep-sea fleets—such as the Grimsby fleet, the Columbia fleet, the Great

Northern, Yarmouth, Red Cross, and other fleets—which do our fishing business from year's end to year's end on the North Sea.

But Billy was thoughtless and apt to enjoy what was agreeable, without reference to its being profitable. Some of the conditions which rejoiced his heart had the reverse effect on his father. That gruff-spirited fisherman did not want oily seas, or serene blue skies, or reflected clouds and sunshine —no, what he wanted was fish, and before the *Evening Star* could drag her ponderous "gear" along the bottom of the sea, so as to capture fish, it was necessary that a stiffish breeze should not only ruffle but rouse the billows of the North Sea—all the better if it should fringe their crests with foam.

"My usual luck," growled David Bright, as he came on deck after a hearty breakfast, and sat down on the bulwarks to fill his pipe and do what in him lay to spoil his digestion—though, to do David justice, his powers in that line were so strong that he appeared to be invulnerable to tobacco and spirits We use the word "appeared" advisedly, for in reality the undermining process was going on surely, though in his case slowly.

His "hands," having enjoyed an equally good breakfast, were moving quietly about, paying similar attention to their digestions!

There was our tall friend Joe Davidson, the mate; and Ned Spivin, a man of enormous chest and shoulders, though short in the legs; and Luke Trevor, a handsome young fellow of middle size, but great strength and activity, and John Gunter, a big sour-faced man with a low brow, rough black hair, and a surly spirit. Billy was supposed to be minding the tiller, but, in the circumstances, the tiller was left to mind itself. Zulu was the only active member on board, to judge from the clatter of his pots and pans below.

"My usual luck," said the skipper a second time in a deeper growl.

"Seems to me," said Gunter, in a growl that was even more deep and discontented than that of the skipper, "that luck is always down on us."

"'Tis the same luck that the rest o' the fleet has got, anyhow," observed Joe Davidson, who was the most cheerful spirit in the smack; but, indeed, all on board, with the exception of the skipper and Gunter, were men of a hearty, honest, cheerful nature, more or less careless about life and limb.

To the mate's remark the skipper said "humph," and Gunter said that he was the unluckiest fellow that ever went to sea.

"You 're always growling, Jack," said Ned Spivin, who was fond of chaffing his mates; "they should have named you Grunter when they were at it."

"I only wish the Coper was alon'side, said the skipper, "but she 's always out of the way when she 's wanted. Who saw her last?"

"I did," said Luke Trevor, "just after we had crossed the Silver Pits; and I wish we might never see her again."

"Why so, mate?" asked Gunter.

"Because she 's the greatest curse that floats on the North Sea," returned Luke in a tone of indignation.

"Ah!—you hate her because you 've jined the teetotallers," returned Gunter with something of a sneer.

"No, mate, I don't hate her because I 've jined the teetotallers, but I 've jined the teetotallers because I hate her."

"Pretty much the same thing, ain't it?"

"No more the same thing," retorted Luke, "than it is the same thing to put the cart before the horse or the horse before the cart. It wasn't total-abstainin' that made me hate the Coper, but it was hatred of the Coper that made me take to total-abstainin'—don't you see?"

"Not he," said Billy Bright, who had joined the group; "Gunter never sees nothing unless you stick it on to the end of his nose, an' even then you 've got to tear his eyes open an' force him to look."

Gunter seized a rope's-end and made a demonstra-

tion of an intention to apply it, but Billy was too active; he leaped aside with a laugh, and then, getting behind the mast, invited the man to come on "an' do his wust."

Gunter laid down the rope's-end with a grim smile and turned to Luke Trevor.

"But I 'm sure you 've got no occasion," he said, "to blackguard the Coper, for you haven't bin to visit her much."

"No, thank God, I have not," said Luke earnestly, "yet I 've bin aboard often enough to wish I had never bin there at all. It 's not that, mates, that makes me so hard on the Coper, but it was through the accursed drink got aboard o' that floatin' grog-shop that I lost my best friend."

"How was that, Luke? we never heerd on it."

The young fisherman paused a few moments as if unwilling to talk on a distasteful subject.

"Well, it ain't surprisin' you didn't hear of it," he said, "because I was in the Morgan fleet at the time, an' it 's more than a year past. The way of it was this. We was all becalmed, on a mornin' much like this, not far off the Borkum Reef, when our skipper jumped into the boat, ordered my friend Sterlin' an' me into it, an' went off cruisin'. We visited one or two smacks, the skippers o' which were great chums of our skipper, an' he got drunk there. Soon after, a stiff breeze sprang up, an' the

admiral signalled to bear away to the nor'-west'ard. We bundled into our boat an' made for our smack, but by ill luck we had to pass the Coper, an' nothin' would please the skipper but to go aboard and have a glass. Sterlin' tried to prevent him, but he grew savage an' told him to mind his own business. Well, he had more than one glass, and by that time it was blowin' so 'ard we began to think we 'd have some trouble to get back again. At last he consented to leave, an' a difficult job it was to get him into the boat wi' the sea that was runnin'. When we got alongside of our smack, he laid hold of Sterlin's oar an' told him to throw the painter aboard. My friend jumped up an' threw the end o' the painter to one of the hands. He was just about to lay hold o' the side an' spring over when the skipper stumbled against him, caused him to miss his grip, an' sent him clean overboard. Poor Sterlin' had on his long boots an' a heavy jacket. He went down like a stone. We never saw him again."

"Did none o' you try to save him?" asked Joe quickly.

"We couldn't," replied Luke. "I made a dash at him, but he was out o' sight by that time. He went down so quick that I can't help thinkin' he must have struck his head on the side in goin' over."

Luke Trevor did not say, as he might have truly said, that he dived after his friend, being himself

a good swimmer, and nearly lost his own life in the attempt to save that of Sterling.

"D'ye think the skipper did it a' purpose, mate?" asked David.

"Sartinly not," answered Luke. "The skipper had no ill-will at him, but he was so drunk he couldn't take care of himself, an' didn't know what he was about."

"That wasn't the fault o' the Coper," growled Gunter. "You say he got half-screwed afore he went there, an' he might have got dead drunk without goin' aboard of her at all."

"So he might," retorted Luke; "nevertheless it *was* the Coper that finished him off at that time—as it has finished off many a man before, and will, no doubt, be the death o' many more in time to come."

The Copers, which Luke Trevor complained of so bitterly, are Dutch vessels which provide spirits and tobacco, the former of a cheap, bad, and peculiarly fiery nature. They follow the fleets everywhere, and are a continual source of mischief to the fishermen, many of whom, like men on shore, find it hard to resist a temptation which is continually presented to them.

"There goes the admiral," sang out little Billy, who, while listening to the conversation, had kept his sharp little eyes moving about.

The admiral of the fleet, among North Sea fishermen, is a very important personage. There is an "admiral" to each fleet, though we write just now about the admiral of the "Short Blue." He is chosen for steadiness and capacity, and has to direct the whole fleet as to the course it shall steer, the letting down of its "gear" or trawls, etc., and his orders are obeyed by all. One powerful reason for such obedience is that if they do not follow the admiral they will find themselves at last far away from the steamers which come out from the Thames daily to receive the fish; for it is a rule that those steamers make straight for the admiral's vessel. By day the admiral is distinguished by a flag half way up the maintop-mast stay. By night signals are made with rockets.

While the crew of the *Evening Star* were thus conversing, a slight breeze had sprung up, and Billy had observed that the admiral's smack was heading to windward in an easterly direction. As the breeze came down on the various vessels of the fleet, they all steered the same course, so that in a few minutes nearly two hundred smacks were following him like a shoal of herring. The glassy surface of the sea was effectually broken, and a field of rippling indigo took the place of the ethereal sheet of blue.

Thus the whole fleet passed steadily to windward,

the object being to get to such a position on the "fishing grounds" before night-fall, that they could put about and sail before the wind during the night, dragging their ponderous trawls over the banks where fish were known to lie.

Night is considered the best time to fish, though they also fish by day, the reason being, it is conjectured, that the fish do not see the net so well at night; it may be, also, that they are addicted to slumber at that period! Be the reason what it may, the fact is well known. Accordingly, about ten o'clock the admiral hove-to for a few minutes. So did the fleet. On board the *Evening Star* they took soundings, and found twenty-five fathoms. Then the admiral called attention by showing a "flare."

"Look out, now, Billy," said David Bright to his son, who was standing close by the capstan.

Billy needed no caution. His sharp eyes were already on the watch.

"A green rocket! There she goes, father."

The green rocket signified that the gear was to be put down on the starboard side, and the fleet to steer to the southward.

Bustling activity and tremendous vigour now characterised the crew of the *Evening Star* as they proceeded to obey the order. A clear starry sky and a bright moon enabled them to see clearly what

they were about, and they were further enlightened by a lantern in the rigging.

The trawl which they had to put down was, as we have said, a huge and ponderous affair, and could only be moved by means of powerful blocks and tackle aided by the capstan. It consisted of a thick spar called the "beam" about forty-eight feet long, and nearly a foot thick, supported on a massive iron hoop, or runner, at each end. These irons were meant to drag over the bottom of the sea and keep the beam from touching it. Attached to this beam was the bag-net—a very powerful one, as may be supposed, with a small mesh. It was seventy feet long, and about sixteen feet of the outermost end was much stronger than the rest, and formed the bag, named the cod-end, in which the fish were ultimately collected. Besides being stronger, the cod-end was covered by flounces of old netting to prevent the rough bottom from chafing it too much. The cost of such a net alone is about £7. To the beam, attached at the two ends, was a very powerful rope called the bridle. It was twenty fathoms long. To this was fastened the warp—a rope made of best manilla and hemp, always of great strength. The amount of this paid out depended much on the weather; if very rough it might be about 40 fathoms, if moderate about 100. Sometimes such net and gear is carried away, and this involves

a loss of about £60 sterling. We may dismiss these statistics by saying that a good night's fishing may be worth from £10 to £27, and a good trip—of eight weeks—may produce from £200 to £280.

Soon the gear was down in the twenty-five fathom water, and the trawl-warp became as rigid almost as an iron bar, while the speed of the smack through the water was greatly reduced—perhaps to three miles an hour—by the heavy drag behind her, a drag that ever increased as fish of all sorts and sizes were scraped into the net. Why the fish are such idiots as to remain in the net when they could swim out of it at the rate of thirty miles an hour is best known to themselves.

Besides the luminaries which glittered in the sky that night, the sea was alive with the mast-head lights of the fishing smacks, but these lower lights, unlike the serenely steady lights above, were ever changing in position, as well as dancing on the crested waves, giving life to the dark waters, and creating, at least in the little breast of Billy Bright, a feeling of companionship which was highly gratifying.

"Now, lad, go below and see if Zulu has got something for us to eat," said David to his son. "Here, Luke Trevor, mind the helm."

The young fisherman, who had been labouring

with the others at the gear like a Hercules, stepped forward and took the tiller, while the skipper and his son descended to the cabin, where the rest of the men were already assembled in anticipation of supper. The cabin was remarkably snug, but it was also pre-eminently simple. So, also, was the meal. The arts of upholstery and cookery had not been brought to bear in either case. The apartment was about twelve feet long by ten broad, and barely high enough to let Joe Davidson stand upright. Two wooden lockers ran along either side of it. Behind these were the bunks of the men. At the inner end were some more lockers, and aft, there was an open stove or fireplace alongside of the companion ladder. A clock and a barometer were the chief ornaments of the place. The atmosphere of it was not fresh by any means, and volumes of tobacco smoke rendered it hazy.

But what cared these heavy-booted, rough-handed, big-framed, iron-sinewed, strong-hearted men for fresh air? They got enough of that, during their long hours on deck, to counteract the stifling odours of the regions below!

"Now, then, boys, dar you is," said Zulu, placing a huge pot on the floor containing some sort of nautical soup. "I's cook you soup an' tea, an' dar's sugar an' butter, an' lots o' fish and biskit, so you fire away till you bu'st yourselves."

The jovial Zulu bestowed on the company a broad and genial grin as he set the example by filling a bowl with the soup. The others did not require a second bidding. What they lacked in quality was more than made up in quantity, and rendered delicious by appetite.

Conversation flagged, of course, while these hardy sons of toil were busy with their teeth, balancing themselves and their cups and bowls carefully while the little vessel rolled heavily over the heaving waves. By degrees the teeth became less active and the tongues began to wag.

"I wish that feller would knock off psalm-singin'," said Gunter with an oath, as he laid down his knife and wiped his mouth.

He referred to Luke Trevor, who possessed a sweet mellow voice, and was cheering himself as he stood at the helm by humming a hymn, or something like one, for the words were not distinguishable in the cabin.

"I think that Luke, if he was here, would wish some other feller to knock off cursin' an' swearin'," said Joe.

"Come, Joe," said the skipper, "don't you pretend to be one o' the religious sort, for you know you 're not."

"That 's true," returned Joe, "and I don't pretend to be; but surely a man may object to cursin' without bein' religious. I 've heard men say that they

don't mean nothin' by their swearin'. P'raps the psalm-singin' men might say the same; but for my part if they both mean nothin' by it, I 'd rather be blessed than cursed by my mates any day."

"The admiral 's signallin', sir," sung out Luke, putting his head down the companion at that moment.

The men went on deck instantly; nevertheless each found time to light the inevitable pipe before devoting himself entirely to duty.

The signal was to haul up the trawl, and accordingly all the fleet set to work at their capstans, the nets having by that time been down about three or four hours.

It was hard work and slow that heaving at the capstans hour after hour with the turbulent sea tossing about the little smacks, few of which were much above seventy tons burden. One or two in the fleet worked their capstans by steam-power—an immense relief to the men, besides a saving of time.

"It's hard on the wrists," said Gunter during a brief pause in the labour, as he turned up the cuffs of his oiled frock and displayed a pair of wrists that might well have caused him to growl. The constant chafing of the hard cuffs had oduced painful sores and swellings, which were further irritated by salt water

"My blessin's on de sweet ladies what takes so much trouble for us," said Zulu, pulling up his sleeves and regarding with much satisfaction a pair of worsted cuffs; "nebber had no sore wrists since I put on dese. W'y you no use him, Gunter?"

"'Cause I've lost 'em, you black baboon," was Gunter's polite reply.

"Nebber mind, you long-nosed white gorilla," was Zulu's civil rejoinder, "you kin git another pair when nixt we goes aboard de mission ship. Till den you kin grin an' enjoy you'self."

"Heave away, lads," said the skipper, and away went the capstan again as the men grasped the handles and bent their strong backs, sometimes heaving in a few turns of the great rope with a run as the trawl probably passed over a smooth bit of sand; sometimes drawing it in with difficulty, inch by inch, as the net was drawn over some rough or rocky place, and occasionally coming for a time to a dead lock, when—as is not unfrequently the case—they caught hold of a bit of old wreck, or, worse still, were caught by the fluke of a lost anchor.

Thus painfully but steadily they toiled until the bridle or rope next to the beam appeared above the waves, and then they knew that the end of all their labour was at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

A HAUL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES—MYSTERIOUS NEWS FROM THE LAND.

"Now Billy, you shrimp," cried David Bright, seizing his son by the collar and giving him a friendly shake that would have been thought severe handling by any but a fisher-boy, "don't go excitin' of yourself. You'll never make a man worth speakin' of if you can't keep down your feelin's."

But Billy could not keep down his feelings. They were too strong for him. He was naturally of an excitable—what we may call a jovial-jumping—disposition, and although he had now been some months at sea he had not yet succeeded in crushing down that burst of delight with which he viewed the cod-end of the great deep-sea net as it was hoisted over the side by the power of block and tackle.

"You never trouble yourself about my feelin's, father, so long 's I do my dooty," said the boy with native insolence, as he looked eagerly over the side at the mass of fish which gleamed faintly white as

it neared the surface, while he helped with all his little might to draw in the net.

"But I want to teach you more than dooty, my boy," returned the skipper. "I've got to make a man of you. I promised that to your mother, you know. If you want to be a man, you must foller my example—be cool an' steady."

"If I'm to foller your example, father, why don't you let me foller it all round, an' smoke an' drink as well?"

"Shut up, you aggrawatin' sinner," growled the skipper. "Heave away, lads. Here, hand me the rope, an' send aft the tackle."

By this time the heavy beam had been secured to the side of the vessel, most of the net hauled in, and the bag, or cod-end, was above the surface filled almost to bursting with upwards of a ton of turbots, soles, haddocks, plaice, dabs, whitings, etc., besides several hundredweight of mud, weeds, stones, and oysters. Sometimes, indeed, this bag does burst, and in one moment all the profit and toil of a night's fishing is lost.

When the skipper had secured a strong rope round the bag and hooked it on to a block and tackle made fast to the rigging, the order was given to heave away, and gradually the ponderous mass rose like an oval balloon, or buoy, over the vessel's side. When it cleared the rail it was swung in-

wards and secured in a hanging position, with the lower end sweeping the deck as the smack rolled from side to side. In all these operations, from the prolonged heaving at the capstan to the hauling in of the net, hand over hand, the men were exerting their great physical powers to the uttermost—almost without a moment's relaxation—besides being deluged at times by spray, which, however, their oiled frocks, long boots, and sou'-westers prevented from quite drenching them. But now all danger of loss was over, and they proceeded to liberate the fish.

The cod-end had its lower part secured by a strong rope. All that had to be done, therefore, was to untie the rope and open the bottom of the net.

It fell to Luke Trevor to do this. Billy was standing by in eager expectation. Ned Spivin stood behind him. Now, we have said that Spivin was fond of chaffing his mates and of practical jokes. So was Billy, and between these two, therefore, there was a species of rivalry.

When Spivin observed that Luke was about to pull out the last loop that held the bag, he shouted in a loud voice of alarm—"Hallo! Billy, catch hold of this rope, quick!"

Billy turned like a flash of light and seized the rope held out to him. The momentary distraction was enough. Before he could understand the joke the bottom of the bag opened, the ton-and-a-half,

more or less, of fish burst forth, spread itself over the deck like an avalanche, swept Billy off his little legs, and almost overwhelmed him, to the immense delight of Spivin, who impudently bent down and offered to help him to rise.

"Come here, Billy, and I'll help you up," he said, kindly, as the tail of a skate flipped across the boy's nose and almost slid into his mouth.

Billy made no reply, but, clearing himself of fish, jumped up, seized a gaping cod by the gills, and sent it all alive and kicking straight into Spivin's face. The aim was true. The man was blinded for a few moments by the fish, and his mates were well-nigh choked with laughter.

"Come, come—no sky-larking!" growled the skipper. "Play when your work is done, boys."

Thus reproved, the crew began to clear away the mass of weeds and refuse, after which all hands prepared the trawl to be ready for going down again, and then they set to work to clean and sort the fish. This was comparatively easy work at that season of the year, but when winter gales and winter frosts sweep over the North Sea, only those who suffer it know what it is to stand on the slimy pitching deck with naked and benumbed hands, disembowelling fish and packing them in small oblong boxes called "trunks," for the London market. And little

do Londoners think, perhaps, when eating their turbot, sole, plaice, cod, haddock, whiting, or other fish, by what severe night-work, amid bitter cold, and too often tremendous risks, the food has been provided for them.

It is not, however, our purpose to moralise just now, though we might do so with great propriety, but to tell our story, on which some of the seemingly trifling incidents of that night had a special bearing. One of those incidents was the cutting of a finger. Ned Spivin, whose tendency towards fun and frolic at all times rendered him rather slap-dash and careless, was engaged in the rather ignoble work of cutting off skates' tails—these appendages not being deemed marketable. This operation he performed with a hatchet, but some one borrowed the hatchet for a few minutes, and Spivin continued the operation with his knife. One of the tails being tough, and the knife blunt, the impatient man used violence. Impatience and violence not unfrequently result in damage. The tail gave way unexpectedly, and Spivin cut a deep gash in his left hand. Cuts, gashes, and bruises are the frequent experience of smacksmen. Spivin bound up the gash with a handkerchief, and went on with his work.

Before their work was quite done, however, a gale which had been threatening from the nor'-west set

in with considerable force, and rapidly increased, so that the packing of the last few trunks, and stowing them into the hold, became a matter not only of difficulty but of danger.

By that time the sky had clouded over, and the lantern in the rigging alone gave light.

"It will blow harder," said Trevor to Billy as they stood under shelter of the weather bulwarks holding on to the shrouds. "Does it never come into your mind to think where we would all go to if the *Evening Star* went down?"

"No, Luke. I can't say as it does. Somehow I never think of father's smack goin' down."

"And yet," returned Luke in a meditative tone, "it may happen, you know, any night. It 's not six months since the *Raven* went down, with all hands, though she was as tight a craft as any in the fleet, and her captain was a first-rate seaman, besides bein' steady."

"Ay, but then, you see," said Billy, "she was took by three heavy seas one arter the other, and no vessel, you know, could stand that."

"No, not even the *Evening Star* if she was took that fashion, an' we never know when it 's goin' to happen. I suspect, Billy, that the psalm-singers, as Gunter calls 'em, has the best of it. They work as well as any men in the fleet—sometimes I think better—an' then they 're always in such a jolly stat-

o' mind! If good luck comes, they praise God for it, an' if bad luck comes they praise God that it's no worse. Whatever turns up they appear to be in a thankful state o' mind, and that seems to me a deal better than growlin', swearin', and grumblin', as so many of us do at what we can't change. What d'ee think, Billy?"

"Well, to tell 'ee the truth, Luke, I don't think about it at all—anyhow, I've never thought about it till to-night."

"But it's worth thinkin' about, Billy?"

"That's true," returned the boy, who was of a naturally straightforward disposition, and never feared to express his opinions freely.

Just then a sea rose on the weather quarter, threatening, apparently, to fall inboard. So many waves had done the same thing before, that no one seemed to regard it much; but the experienced eye of the skipper noticed a difference, and he had barely time to give a warning shout when the wave rushed over the side like a mighty river, and swept the deck from stem to stern. Many loose articles were swept away and lost, and the boat, which lay on the deck alongside of the mast, had a narrow escape. Billy and his friend Luke, being well under the lee of the bulwarks, escaped the full force of the deluge, but Ned Spivin, who steered, was all but torn from his position, though he clung with all his strength to

the tiller and the rope that held it fast. The skipper was under the partial shelter of the mizzen-mast and clung to the belaying-pins. John Gunter was the only one who came to grief. He was dashed with great violence to leeward, but held on to the shrouds for his life. The mate was below at the moment, and so was Zulu, whose howl coming from the cabin, coupled with a hiss of water in the fire, told that he had suffered from the shock.

The immense body of water that filled the main-sail threw the vessel for a short time nearly on her beam-ends—a position that may be better understood when we say that it converts one of the sides of the vessel into the floor, the other side into the ceiling, and the floor and deck respectively into upright walls!

Fortunately the little smack got rid of the water in a few seconds, arose slowly, and appeared to shake herself like a duck rising out of the sea. Sail had already been reduced to the utmost; nevertheless, the wind was so strong that for three hours afterwards the crew never caught sight of the lee-bulwarks, so buried were they in foam as the *Evening Star* leaned over and rushed madly on her course.

Towards morning the wind moderated a little, and then the crew gazed anxiously around on the heaving grey waves, for well did they know that

such a squall could not pass over the North Sea without claiming its victims.

"It blowed that 'ard at one time," said Ned Spivin to Joe Davidson, "that I expected to see the main-mast tore out of 'er."

"I'm afeard for the *Rainbow*," said Joe. "She's nothin' better than a old bunch o' boards."

"Sometimes them old things hold out longer than we expect," returned Ned.

He was right. When the losses of that night came to be reckoned up, several good vessels were discovered to be missing, but the rotten old *Rainbow* still remained undestroyed though not unscathed, and a sad sight met the eyes of the men of the fleet when daylight revealed the fact that some of the smacks had their flags flying half-mast, indicating that many men had been washed overboard and lost during the night.

As the day advanced, the weather improved, and the fishermen began to look anxiously out for the steamer which was to convey their fish to market, but none was to be seen. Although a number of steamers run between Billingsgate and the Short Blue fleet, it sometimes happens that they do not manage to find the fleet at once, and occasionally a day or more is lost in searching for it—to the damage of the fish if the weather be warm. It seemed as if a delay of this kind had happened on the occasion

of which we write; the admiral therefore signalled to let down the nets for a day haul.

While this was being done, a vessel was seen to join the fleet from the westward.

"That's Singin' Peter," said David Bright to his mate. "I'd know his rig at any distance."

"So it is. P'raps he's got letters for us."

Singing Peter was one of the many fishermen who had been brought to a knowledge of Jesus Christ, and saved from his sins. Wild and careless before conversion, he afterwards became an enthusiastic follower of the Lamb of God, and was so fond of singing hymns in His praise that he became known in the fleet by the sobriquet of Singing Peter. His beaming face and wholly changed life bore testimony to what the Holy Spirit had wrought in him.

Peter had been home to Garlston on his week of holiday, and had now returned to the fleet for his eight weeks' fishing-cruise, carrying a flag to show that he had just arrived, bringing letters and clothes, etc., for some of the crews.

"I used to think Peter warn't a bad feller," said David Bright, as the new arrival drew near; "he was always good company, an' ready for his glass, but now he's taken to singin' psalms, I can make nothin' of 'im."

"There's them in the fleet that like him better since he took to that," said Luke Trevor.

"It may be so, lad, but that 's not accordin' to *my* taste," retorted the skipper.

David was, however, by no means a surly fellow. When Peter's vessel came within hail, he held up his hand and shouted—

"What cheer! what cheer, Peter!" as heartily as possible.

Singing Peter held up his hand in reply, and waved it as he shouted back—

"What cheer! All well, praise the Lord!"

"D'ye hear that, Billy?" said Luke, in a low voice. "*He* never forgets to praise the Lord."

When the vessels drew nearer, Peter again waved his hand, and shouted—

"I 've got letters for 'ee."

"All right, my hearty! I 'll send for 'em."

In less than five minutes the boat of the *Evening Star* was launched over the side, stern foremost, and she had scarce got fairly afloat on the dancing waves when Joe and Luke "swarmed" into her, had the oars out, and were sweeping off so as to intercept Peter's vessel. They soon reached her, received a packet wrapped up in a bit of newspaper, and quickly returned.

The packet contained two letters—one for the skipper, the other for the mate—from their respective wives.

"Joe," said the skipper, when he had perused

his letter, "come down below. I want to speak to 'ee."

"That 's just what I was goin' to say to yourself, for the letter from my missis says somethin' that consarns you."

When master and mate were alone together in the cabin, each read to the other his letter.

"My missis," said the skipper, unfolding his letter and regarding it with a puzzled expression, "although she 's had a pretty good edication, has paid little attention to her pot-hooks—but this is how it runs—pretty near. 'Dear old man' (she 's always been an affectionate woman, Joe, though I do treat her badly when I 'm in liquor), 'I hope you are having a good time of it, and that darling Billy likes the sea, and is a good boy. My reason for writing just now is to tell you about that dear sweet creature, Miss Ruth Dotropy. She has been down at Yarmouth again on a visit, and of course she has been over to see me and Mrs. Davidson, in *such* a lovely blue—' (ah! well, Joe, there 's no need to read you that bit; it 's all about dress—as if dress could make Miss Ruth better or worse! But women's minds will run on ribbons an' suchlike. Well, after yawin' about for a bit, she comes back to the pint, an' steers a straight course again. She goes on, after a blot or two that I can't make nothin' of), 'You 'll be surprised to

hear, David, that she 's been making some particular inquiries about you and me; which I don't understand at all, and looking as if she knew a deal more than she cared to tell. She 's been asking Mrs. Davidson too about it, and what puzzles me most is' (there 's another aggrawatin' blot here, Joe, so that I can't make out what puzzles her. Look here. Can you spell it out?)"

Joe tried, but shook his head.

"It 's a puzzler to *her*," he said, "an' she 's took good care to make it a puzzler to everybody else, but go on."

"There 's nothin' else to go on wi', Joe, for after steerin' past the blot, she runs foul o' Miss Ruth's dress again, and the only thing worth mentionin' is a P.S., where she says, 'I think there 's something wrong, dear David, and I wish you was here.' That 's all."

"Now, that is strange, for my missis writes about the wery same thing," said Joe, "only she seems to have gone in for a little more confusion an' blots than your missis, an' that blessed little babby of ours is always gittin' in the way, so she can't help runnin' foul of it, but that same puzzler crops up every now an' then. See, here 's what she writes:—

"'Darlin' Joe' (a touch more affectionate than yours—eh! skipper?), 'if our dear darlin' babby will let me, I 'm agoin' to write you a letter—there,

I know'd she wouldn't. She 's bin and capsized the wash-tub, though, as you know, she can't walk yet, but she rolls about most awful, Joe, just what you say the *Evening Star* does in a gale on the North Sea. An' she 's got most dreadful heels—oh! you 've no idear! Whativer they comes down upon goes—' There 's a big blot here," said Joe, with a puzzled look, "'goes—whativer they comes down upon goes'—no, I can't make it out."

"'Goes to sticks an' stivers,' p'raps," said the skipper.

"No, my Maggie never uses words like that," said Joe with decision.

"'Goes all to smash,' then," suggested the skipper.

"No, nor it ain't that; my Maggie 's too soft-tongued for that."

"Well, you know, things must go somewhere, or somehow, Joe, when such a pair o' heels comes down on 'em—but steer clear o' the blot and the babby, an' see what comes next."

"'Well,'" continued Joe, reading on, "'I was goin' to tell you, when babby made that last smash ("I *told* you it was a smash," said David, softly) that dear Miss Ruth has bin worritin' herself—if babby would only keep quiet for two minutes—worritin' herself about Mrs. Bright in a way that none of us can understand. She 's anxious to make

inquiries about her and her affairs in a secret sort o' way, but the dear young lady is so honest—there's babby again! Now, I've got her all right. It was the milk-can this time, but there warn't much in it, an' the cat's got the benefit. Well, darlin' Joe, where was I—oh, the dear young lady's so honest an' straitfor'ard, that even a child could see through her, though none of us can make out what she's drivin' at. Yesterday she went to see Mrs. Bright, an' took a liar with her—'"

"Hallo! Joe, surely she'd niver do that," said the skipper in a remonstrative tone.

"She means a lawyer," returned Joe, apologetically, "but Maggie niver could spell that word, though I've often tried to teach 'er—'Maggie,' says I, 'you mustn't write *liar*, but *law-yer*.'"

"'La! yer jokin',' says she.

"'No,' says I, 'I'm not, that's the way to spell it;' an' as Maggie's a biddable lass, she got to do it all right, but her memory ain't over strong, so, you see, she's got back to the old story. Howsever, she don't really mean it, you know."

"Just so," returned the skipper, "heave ahead wi' the letter, Joe."

Knitting his brows, and applying himself to the much soiled and crumpled sheet, the mate continued to read:—

"'An' the liar he puzzled her with all sorts o'

questions, just as if he was a schoolmaster and she a school-girl. He bothered her to that extent she began to lose temper ("he better take care," muttered the skipper, chuckling), but Miss Ruth she sees that, an' putt a stop to it in her own sweet way ("lucky for the liar," muttered the skipper), an' so they went away without explainin'. We 've all had a great talk over it, an' we 're most of us inclined to think—oh! that babby, she 's bin an' rammed her darlin' futt into the tar-bucket! but it ain't much the worse, though it 's cost about half-a-pound o' butter to take it off, an' that ain't a joke wi' butter at 1s. 4d. a pound, an' times so bad—well, as I was goin' to say, if that blessed babby would only let me, we 're all inclined to think it must have somethin' to do wi' that man as David owes money to, who said last year that he 'd sell his smack an' turn him an' his family out o' house an' home if he didn't pay up, though what Miss Ruth has to do wi' that, or how she come for to know it, we can't make out at all.' "

"The blackguard!" growled the skipper, fiercely, referring to "that man," "if I only had his long nose within three futt o' my fist, I 'd let him feel what my knuckles is made of!"

"Steamer in sight, father," sang out Billy at that moment down the companion-hatch.

The conference being thus abruptly terminated,

the skipper and mate of the *Evening Star* went on deck to give orders for the immediate hauling up of the trawl and to "have a squint" at the steamer, which was seen at that moment like a little cloud on the horizon.

CHAPTER VIII.

DANGERS, DIFFICULTIES, AND EXCITEMENTS OF THE TRAFFIC; LOADING THE STEAMER.

BUSTLING activity of the most vigorous kind was now the order of the day in the Short Blue fleet, for the arrival of the carrying steamer, and the fact that she was making towards the admiral, indicated that she meant to return to London in a few hours, and necessitated the hauling of the trawls, cleaning the fish, and packing them; getting up the "trunks" that had been packed during the night, launching the boats, and trans-shipping them in spite of the yet heavy sea.

As every one may understand, such perishable food as fish must be conveyed to market with the utmost possible despatch. This is accomplished by the constant running of fast steamers between the fleets and the Thames. The fish when put on board are further preserved by means of ice, and no delay is permitted in trans-shipment. As we have said, the steamers are bound to make straight for the admiral's smack. Knowing this, the other

vessels keep as near to the admiral as they conveniently can, so that when the steamer is preparing to return, they may be ready to rush at her like a fleet of nautical locusts, and put their fish on board.

Hot haste and cool precision mark the action of the fishermen in all that is done, for they know well that only a limited time will be allowed them, and if any careless or wilful stragglers from the fleet come up when the time is nearly past, they stand a chance of seeing the carrier steam off without their fish, which are thus left to be shipped the following day, and to be sold at last as an inferior article, or, perhaps, condemned and thrown away as unfit for human food.

The *Evening Star* chanced to be not far from the admiral when the steamer appeared. It was one of the fleet of steam-carriers owned by the well-known fish firm of Messrs. Hewett and Co. of London. When it passed David Bright's smack the crew had got in the trawl and were cleaning and packing the catch—which was a good one—as if their very lives depended on their speed. They immediately followed in the wake of the carrier toward the admiral.

As all the smacks were heading towards the same centre, they came in on every tack, and from all points of the compass.

"Look sharp, boys," said David Bright, who was

steering, "we must git every fish aboard. It's now eight o'clock, an' she won't wait beyond eleven or twelve, you may be sure."

There was no need for the caution. Every man and boy was already doing his utmost.

It fell to Billy's lot to help in packing the trunks, and deftly he did it,—keeping soles, turbot, and halibut separate, to form boxes, or "trunks of prime," and packing other fish as much as possible according to their kind, until he came to roker, dabs, gurnets, etc., which he packed together under the name of "offal." This does not mean refuse, but only inferior fish, which are bought by hawkers, and sold to the poor. The trunks were partly open on top, but secured by cords which kept the fish from slipping out, and each trunk was labelled with the name of the smack to which it belonged, and the party to whom it was consigned.

As the fleet converged to the centre, the vessels began to crowd together and friends to recognise and hail each other, so that the scene became very animated, while the risk of collision was considerable. Indeed, it was only by consummate skill, judgment, and coolness that, in many cases, collisions were avoided.

"There's the *Sparrow*,' said Billy to Trevor, eagerly, as he pointed to a smack, whose master, Jim Frost, he knew and was fond of. It bore down

in such a direction as to pass close under the stern of the *Evening Star*.

"What cheer! what cheer!" cried Billy, holding one of his little hands high above his head.

"What cheer!" came back in strong, hearty tones from the *Sparrow's* deck.

"What luck, Jim?" asked David Bright, as the vessel flew past.

"We fouled an old wreck this mornin', an' tore the net all to pieces, but we got a good haul last night—praise the Lord."

"Which piece o' luck d' ye praise the Lord for?" demanded David, in a scoffing tone.

"For both," shouted Frost, promptly. "It might have bin worse. We might have lost the gear, you know—or one o' the hands."

When this reply was finished, the vessels were too far apart for further intercourse.

"Humph!" ejaculated Gunter, "one o' the psalm-singin' lot, I suppose."

"If it's the psalm-singin'," said Spivin, "as makes Jim Frost bear his troubles wi' good temper, an' thank God for foul weather an' fair, the sooner you take to it the better for yourself."

"Ay, an' for his mates," added Zulu, with a broad grin.

"Shove out the boat now, lads," said the skipper.

At this order the capacious and rather clumsy

boat, which had hitherto lain on the deck of the *Evening Star* like a ponderous fixture, was seized by the crew. A vigorous pull at a block and tackle sent it up on the side of the smack. A still more vigorous shove by the men—some with backs applied, some with arms, and all with a will—sent it stern-foremost into the sea. It took in a few gallons of water by the plunge, but was none the worse for that.

At the same moment Zulu literally tumbled into it. No stepping or jumping into it was possible with the sea that was running. Indeed the fishermen of the North Sea are acrobats by necessity, and their tumbling is quite as wonderful, though not quite so neat, as that of professionals. Perchance if the arena in which the latter perform were to pitch about as heavily as the *Evening Star* did on that occasion, they might be beaten at their own work by the fishermen!

Zulu was followed by Ned Spivin, while Gunter, taking a quick turn of the long and strong painter round a belaying-pin, held on.

The *Eening Star* was now lying-to, not far from the steam-carrier. Her boat danced on the waves like a cork, pitching heavily from side to side, with now the stern and now the bow pointing to the sky; at one moment leaping with its gunwale above the level of the smack's bulwarks; at the next

moment eight or ten feet down in the trough of the waves; never at rest for an instant, always tugging madly at its tether, and often surging against the vessel's side, from actual contact with which it was protected by strong rope fenders. But indeed the boat's great strength of build seemed its best guarantee against damage.

To one unaccustomed to such work it might have seemed utterly impossible to put anything whatever on board of such a pitching boat. Tying a mule-pack on the back of a bouncing wild horse may suggest an equivalent difficulty to a landsman. Nevertheless the crew of the *Evening Star* did it with as much quiet determination and almost as much speed as if there was no sea on at all. Billy and Trevor slid the trunks to the vessel's side; the mate and Gunter lifted them, rested them a moment on the edge; Zulu and Spivin stood in the surging boat with outstretched arms and glaring eyes. A mighty swing of the boat suggested that the little craft meant to run the big one down. They closed, two trunks were grappled, let go, deposited, and before the next wave swung them alongside again, Spivin and Zulu were glaring up—ready for more—while Joe and Gunter were gazing down—ready to deliver.

When the boat was loaded the painter was cast off and she dropped astern. The oars were shipped,

and they made for the steamer. From the low deck of the smack they could be seen, now pictured against the sky on a wave's crest, and then lost to view altogether for a few seconds in the watery valley beyond.

By that time quite a crowd of little boats had reached the steamer, and were holding on to her, while their respective smacks lay-to close by, or sailed slowly round the carrier, so that recognitions, salutations, and friendly chaff were going on all round—the confusion of masts, and sails, and voices ever increasing as the outlying portions of the fleet came scudding in to the rendezvous.

"There goes the *Boy Jim*," said Luke Trevor, pointing towards a smart craft that was going swiftly past them.

"Who's the *Boy Jim?*" growled Gunter, whose temper, at no time a good one, had been much damaged by the blows he had received in the fall of the previous night.

"He's nobody—it's the name o' that smack," answered Luke.

"An' her master, John Johnston, is one o' my best friends," said Billy, raising his fist on high in salutation. "What cheer, John! what cheer, my hearty!"

The master of the *Boy Jim* was seen to raise his hand in reply to the salutation, and his voice came

strong and cheerily over the sea, but he was too far off to be heard distinctly, so Billy raised his hand again by way of saying, "All right, my boy!"

At the same time a hail was heard at the other side of the vessel. The crew turned round and crossed the deck.

"It's our namesake—or nearly so—the *Morning Star*," said Trevor to Gunter, for the latter being a new hand knew little of the names of either smacks or masters.

"Is her skipper a friend o' yours too?" asked Gunter of Billy.

"Yes, Bowers *is* a friend o' mine—an' a first-rate fellow too; which is more than you will ever be," retorted Billy, again stretching up the ready arm and hand. "What cheer, Joseph, what cheer!"

"What cheer! Billy—why, I didn't know you, you've grow'd so much," shouted the master of the *Morning Star*, whose middle-sized, but broad and powerful frame was surmounted by a massive countenance, with good humour in the twinkling eyes, and kindly chaff often in the goodly-sized mouth.

"Yes, I've grow'd," retorted Billy, "an' I mean to go on growin' till I'm big enough to wallop *you*."

"Your cheek has been growin' too, Billy."

"So it has, but nothin' like to your jaw, Joseph.

"What luck?" shouted David as the *Morning Star* was passing on.

"Fifteen trunks. What have *you* got?"

The skipper held up his hand to acknowledge the information, and shouted "nineteen," in reply.

"You seem to have a lot o' friends among the skippers, Billy," said Gunter, with a sneer, for he was fond of teasing the boy, who, to do him justice, could take chaff well, except when thrown at him by ill-natured fellows.

"Yes, I have a good lot," retorted Billy. "I met 'em all first in Yarmouth, when ashore for their week's holiday. There's Joseph White, master of the mission smack *Cholmondeley*, a splendid feller he is; an' Bogers of the *Cephas*, an' Snell of the *Ruth*, an' Kiddell of the *Celerity*, an' Moore of the M.A.A., an' Roberts of the *Magnet*, an' Goodchild and Brown, an' a lot more, all first-rate fellers, whose little fingers are worth the whole o' your big body."

"Well, well, what a lucky fellow you are!" said Gunter, with affected surprise; "an' have you no bad fellers at all among your acquaintance?"

"Oh yes," returned the boy quickly, "I knows a good lot o' them too. There's Dick the Swab, of the *White Cloud*, who drinks like a fish, an' Pimply Brock, who could swear you out o' your oiled frock in five minutes, an' a lot of others more or less

wicked, but not one of 'em so bad as a big ugly feller I knows named John Gunter, who—"

Billy was interrupted by Gunter making a rush at him, but the boy was too nimble for the man, besides which, Gunter's bruises, to which we have before referred, were too painful to be trifled with. Soon afterwards the boat returned for another cargo of trunks, and the crew of the *Evening Star* went to work again.

Meanwhile the "power of littles" began to tell on the capacious hold of the steamer. Let us go on board of her for a few minutes and mount the bridge. The fleet had now closed in and swarmed around her so thickly, that it seemed a miracle that the vessels did not come into collision. From the smacks boat after boat had run alongside and made fast, until an absolute flotilla was formed on either side. As each boat came up it thrust itself into the mass, the man who had pulled the bow-oar taking the end of the long painter in his hand ready for a leap. Some boats' crews, having trans-shipped their trunks, were backing out; others were in the midst of that arduous and even dangerous operation; while still more came pouring in, seeking a place of entrance through the heaving mass.

The boat of the *Evening Star* was ere long among the latter with her second load—Zulu grinning in the bow and Spivin in the stern. Zulu was of that

cheery temperament that cannot help grinning. If he had been suddenly called on to face Death himself, we believe he would have met him with a grin. And, truly, we may say without jesting, that Zulu had often so faced the King of Terrors, for it is a sad fact that many a bold and brave young fellow meets his death in this operation of trans-shipping the fish—a fall overboard is so very easy, and, hampered as these men are with huge sea-boots and heavy garments, it too often happens that when they chance to fall into the sea they go down like a stone.

They never seem to think of that, however. Certainly Zulu did not, as he crouched there with glittering eyes and glistening teeth, like a dark tiger ready for a spring.

There was strict discipline, but not much interference with the work, on board the steamer. No boat was permitted to put its trunks aboard abaft a certain part of the vessel, but in front of that the fishermen were left to do the work as best they could. They were not, however, assisted—not even to the extent of fastening their painters—the crew of the steamer being employed below in stowing and iceing the fish.

When the *Evening Star's* boat, therefore, had forced itself alongside, Zulu found himself heaving against the steamer's side, now looking up at an iron

wall about fifteen feet high, anon pitching high on the billows till he could see right down on the deck. He watched his opportunity, threw himself over the iron wall, with the painter in one hand (while Spivin and the boat seemed to sink in the depths below), rolled over on the deck, scrambled to his feet, made the painter fast to the foremast shrouds, and ran to look over the side.

Spivin was there ready for him, looking up, with a trunk on the boat's gunwale. Next moment he was looking down, for a wave had lifted the boat's gunwale absolutely above the vessel's bulwark for an instant. No words were needed. Each knew what to do. Zulu made a powerful grab, Spivin let go, the trunk was on the steamer's rail, whence it was hurled to the deck, narrowly missing the legs and toes of half-a-dozen reckless men who seized it and sent it below. Almost before Zulu could turn round Spivin was up again with another trunk, another wild grab was made, but not successfully, and Spivin sank to rise again. A second effort proved successful—and thus they went on, now and then missing the mark, but more frequently hitting it, until the boat was empty.

You have only to multiply this little scene by forty or fifty, and you have an idea of the loading of that steamer on the high seas. Of course you must diversify the picture a little, for in one place

you have a man hanging over the side with a trunk in mid-air, barely caught when in its descent, and almost too heavy for him by reason of his position. In another place you have a man glaring up at a trunk, in another glaring down;—in all cases action the most violent and most diversified, coupled with cool contempt of crushed fingers and bruised shins and toes.

At last the furor began to subside. By degrees the latest boats arrived, and in about three hours from the time of commencing, the crew of the steamer began to batten down the hatches. Just then, like the "late passenger," the late trawler came up. The captain of the steamer had seen it long before on the horizon doing its best to save the market, and good-naturedly delayed a little to take its fish on board, but another smack that came up a quarter of an hour or so after that, found the hatches closed, and heard the crushing reply to his hail—"Too late!"

Then the carrying steamer turned her sharp bow to the sou'-west, put on full steam, and made for the Thames—distant nearly 300 miles—with over 2000 trunks of fresh fish on board, for the breakfast, luncheon and dinner tables of the Great City. Thus, if the steamer were to leave early on a Monday, it would arrive on Tuesday night and the fish be sold in the market on Wednesday morning about five o'clock.

With little variation this scene is enacted every day, all the year round, on the North Sea. It may not be uninteresting to add, that on the arrival of the steamer at Billingsgate, the whole of her cargo would probably be landed and sold in less than one hour and a half.

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER DRAG-NET HAULED—THE MISSION SMACK.

WHEN the steamer left the fleet the wind was beginning to moderate, and all eyes were turned as usual towards the admiral's smack to observe his movements.

The fishing vessels were still crowded together, running to and fro, out and in, without definite purpose, plunging over the heaving swells—some of them visible on the crests, others half hidden in the hollows—and behaving generally like living creatures that were impatiently awaiting the signal to begin a race.

While in this position two smacks came so near to the *Evening Star*, on opposite sides, that they seemed bent on running her down. David Bright did not concern himself, however. He knew they were well able to take care of themselves. They both sheered off to avoid him, but after doing so, ran rather near to each other.

"One o' them b'longs to the Swab," said Billy.

"Ay," said Joe, "if he hadn't swabbed up too much liquor this morning, he wouldn't steer like that. Why, he *will* foul her!"

As he spoke the Swab's bowsprit passed just inside one of the ropes of the other vessel, and was snapped off as if it had been a pipe-stem.

"Sarves him right," growled Gunter.

"It 's a pity all the same," said Trevor. "If we all got what we deserve, we 'd be in a worse case than we are to-day mayhap."

"Come, now, Gunter," said Joe, "don't look so cross. We 'll have a chance this arternoon, I see, to bear away for the mission ship, an' git somethin' for your shins, and a bandage for Spivin's cut, as well as some cuffs for them that wants 'em."

Captain Bright did not like visiting the mission ship, having no sympathy with her work, but as she happened to be not far distant at the time, and he was in want of surgical assistance, he had no reasonable ground for objecting.

By this time the admiral had signalled to steer to the nor'-east, and the fleet was soon racing to windward, all on the same tack. Gradually the *Evening Star* overhauled the mission ship, but before she had quite overtaken her, the wind, which had been failing, fell to a dead calm. The distance betweer the two vessels, however, not being great, the boat

was launched, and the skipper, Luke Trevor, Gunter and Billy went off in her.

The mission vessel, to which reference has more than once been made, is a fishing smack in the service of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, and serves the purpose of a floating church, a dispensary, a temperance hall, and a library to a portion of the North Sea fleet. It fills a peculiar as well as a very important position, which requires explanation.

Only a few years ago a visitor to the North Sea fleet observed, with much concern, that hundreds of the men and boys who manned it were living godless as well as toilsome lives, with no one—at least in winter—to care for their souls. At the same time he noted that the Dutch *copers*, or floating grog-shops, were regularly appointed to supply the fleets with cheap and bad spirits, and stuck to them through fair weather and foul, in summer and winter, enduring hardship and encountering danger and great risk in pursuit of their evil calling. Up to that time a few lay missionaries and Bible-readers had occasionally gone to visit the fleets in the summer-time,* but the visitor of whom we write felt that there was a screw loose here, and reasoned with himself somewhat thus:—"Shall the devil have his mission ships, whose crews are not afraid to face the winter gales, and shall the

* See Appendix.

servants of the Lord be mere fair-weather Christians, carrying their blessed and all-important message of love and peace to these hard-working and almost forsaken men only during a summer-trip to the North Sea? If fish *must* be caught, and the lives of fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons be not only risked but lost for the purpose, has not the Master got men who are ready to say, 'The glorious Gospel *must* be carried to these men, and we will hoist our flag on the North Sea summer and winter, so as to be a constant witness there for our God and His Christ'?"

For thirty years before, it has been said, a very few earnest Christians among the fishermen of the fleet had been praying that some such thoughts might be put into the hearts of men who had the power to render help.

We venture to observe in passing that, perchance, those praying fishermen were not so "few" as appearances might lead us to suppose, for God has His "hidden ones" everywhere, and some of these may have been at the throne of grace long prior to the "thirty years" here mentioned.

Let not the reader object to turn aside a few minutes to consider how greatly help was needed—forty-six weeks or so on the sea in all weathers all the year round, broken by a week at a time—or about six or seven weeks altogether—on shore with wife and family; the rest. hard unvarying toil and exposure,

with nothing to do during the brief intervals of leisure—nothing to read, nothing new to think of, no church to raise the mind to the Creator, and distinguish the Sabbath from the week-day, and no social intercourse of a natural kind (for a society of men only is not natural) to elevate them above the lower animals, and with only drinking and gambling left to degrade them below these creatures; and this for forty or fifty years of their lives, with, in too many cases, neither hope nor thought beyond!

At last the fishermen's prayers were answered, the thoughts of the visitor bore fruit, and, convinced that he was being led by God, he began to move in the matter with prayer and energy. The result was that in the year 1881 he received the unsolicited offer of a smack which should be at his entire disposal for mission purposes, but should endeavour to sustain herself, if possible, by fishing like the rest of the fleet. The vessel was accepted. A Christian skipper and fisherman, named Budd, and a like-minded crew, were put into her; she was fitted out with an extra cabin, with cupboards for a library and other conveniences. The hold was arranged with a view to being converted into a chapel on Sundays, and it was decided that, in order to keep it clear on such days, the trawl should not be let down on Saturday nights; a large medicine-chest—which was afterwards reported to be "one of

the greatest blessings in the fleet"—was put on board; the captain made a colporteur of the Bible Society, agent for the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society and of the Church of England Temperance Society. The Religious Tract Society, and various publishers, made a grant of books to form the nucleus of a free lending library; the National Lifeboat Institution presented an aneroid barometer, and Messrs. Hewett & Co. made a present of the insurance premium of £50. Thus furnished and armed, as aforesaid, as a Mission Church, Temperance Hall, Circulating Library, and Dispensary, the little craft one day sailed in amongst the smacks of the "Short Blue" fleet, amid the boisterous greetings of the crews, and took up her position under the name of the *Ensign*, with a great twenty-feet Mission-flag flying at the main-mast head.*

This, then was the style of vessel towards

* Since that day additional vessels have been attached to the Mission-fleet, which now [1886] consists of five smacks—and will probably, ere long, number many more—all earning their own maintenance while serving the Mission cause. But these do by no means meet the requirements of the various North Sea fleets. There are still in those fleets thousands of men and boys who derive no benefit from the Mission vessels already sent out, because they belong to fleets to which Mission-ships have not yet been attached; and it is the earnest prayer of those engaged in the good work that liberal-minded Christians may send funds to enable them not only to carry on, but to extend, their operations in this interesting field of labour.

which the boat of the *Evening Star* was now being pulled over a superficially smooth but still heaving sea. The boat was not alone. Other smacks, the masters of which as well as some of the men were professed Christians, had availed themselves of the opportunity to visit the mission smack, while not a few had come, like the master of the *Evening Star*, to procure medicine and books, so that when David Bright drew near he observed the deck to be pretty well crowded, while a long tail of boats floated astern, and more were seen coming over the waves to the rendezvous.

It was no solemn meeting that. Shore-going folk, who are too apt to connect religious gatherings with Sunday clothes, subdued voices, and long faces, would have had their ideas changed if they had seen it. Men of the roughest cast, mentally and physically, were there, in heavy boots and dirty garments, laughing and chatting, and greeting one another; some of the younger among them skylarking in a mild way—that is, giving an occasional poke in the ribs that would have been an average blow to a "land-lubber," or a tip to a hat which sent it on the deck, or a slap on the back like a pistol-shot. There seemed to be "no humbug," as the saying goes, among these men; no pretence, and all was kindly good-fellowship, for those who were on the Lord's side showed it—if need were, said it—while those

who were not, felt, perhaps, that they were in a minority and kept quiet.

"Come along, Joe, what cheer!" "Here you are, Bill—how goes it, my hearty!" "All well, praise the Lord." "Ay, hasn't He sent us fine weather at the right time? just to let us have a comfortable meetin'!" "That's so, Dick, the Master does all things well." "What cheer! Johnson, I'm glad to see *you* here. The boy has got some cocoa for'ard —have some?" "Thank 'ee, I will."

Such were some of the expressions heartily uttered, which flew about as friend met friend on the mission deck.

"I say, Harry," cried one, "was it you that lost your bowsprit this mornin'?'

"No, it was the Swab," said Harry, "but we lost our net and all the gear last night."

"That was unfort'nit," remarked a friend in a tone of sympathy, which attracted the attention of some of those who stood near.

"Ah! lads," said the master of the mission ship, "that was a small matter compared with the loss suffered by poor Daniel Rodger. Did you hear of it?"

"Yes, yes," said some; "No," said another. "I thought I saw his flag half-mast this mornin', but was too fur off to make sure."

Most of the men crowded round the master of the smack, while, in deep sad tones, he told how the

son of Daniel Rodger had, during the night, been swept overboard by a heavy sea and drowned before the boat could be launched to rescue him. "But," continued the speaker in a cheerful voice, "the dear boy was a follower of Jesus, and he is now with Him."

When this was said, "Praise the Lord!" and "Thank God!" broke from several of the men in tones of unmistakable sincerity.

It was at this point that the boat of the *Evening Star* ranged alongside. The master of the mission smack went to the side and held out his hand, which David Bright grasped with his right, grappling the smack's rail at the same time with his left, and vaulted inboard with a hearty salutation. As heartily was it returned, especially by the unbelievers on board, who, perchance, regarded him as a welcome accession to their numbers!

Billy, Gunter, and the others tumbled on to the deck in the usual indescribable manner, and the former, making fast the long painter, added the *Evening Star's* boat to the lengthening flotilla astern.

"Your man seems to be hurt," said the master of the mission smack—whom we may well style the missionary—"not badly, I hope. You're limpin' a bit."

"Oh! nothin' to speak of," growled Gunter, "on'y a bit o' skin knocked off."

"We'll put that all right soon," returned the missionary, shaking hands with the other members of the crew. "But p'r'aps you'd like to go below with us, first. We're goin' to hold a little service. It'll be more comfortable under hatches than on deck."

"No, thank'ee," replied Gunter with decision. "I'll wait till yer done."

"P'r'aps *you* would like to come?" said the missionary to the captain.

"Well, I—I may as well as not," said David with some hesitation.

"Come along then, lads," and the genial sailor-missionary led the way to the capacious hold, which had been swept clean, and some dozens of fish-boxes set up on end in rows. These, besides being handy, formed excellent seats to men who were not much used to arm-chairs.

In a few seconds the little church on the Ocean Wilderness was nearly full of earnest, thoughtful men, for these fishermen were charmingly natural as well as enthusiastic. They did not assume solemn expressions, but all thought of skylarking or levity seemed to have vanished as they entered the hold, and earnestness almost necessarily involves gravity.

With eager expectation they gazed at their leader while he gave out a hymn.

"You 'll find little books on the table here, those of you who haven't got 'em," he said, pointing to a little pile of red-covered booklets at his side. "We 'll sing the 272d.

'Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words of life!'"

Really, reader, it is not easy to convey in words the effect of the singing of that congregation! Nothing that we on land are accustomed to can compare with it. In the first place, the volume of sound was tremendous, for these men seemed to have been gifted with leathern lungs and brazen throats. Many of the voices were tuneful as well as powerful. One or two, indeed, were little better than cracked tea-kettles, but the good voices effectually drowned the cracked kettles. Moreover, there was deep enthusiasm in many of the hearts present, and the hold was small. We leave the rest to the reader's imagination, but we are bound to say that it had a thrilling effect. And they were sorry, too, when the hymn was finished. This was obvious, for when one of the singers began the last verse over again the others joined him with alacrity and sang it straight through. Even Gunter and those like-minded men who had remained on deck were moved by the fervour of the singing.

Then the sailor-missionary offered a prayer, as simple as it was straightforward and short, after

which a chapter was read, and another hymn sung. Then came the discourse, founded on the words, "Whosoever will." "There you have it, lads—clear as the sun at noonday—free as the rolling sea. The worst drunkard and swearer in the Short Blue comes under that 'whosoever'—ay, the worst man in the world, for Jesus is able and willing to save to the uttermost." ("Praise God!" ejaculated one of the earnest listeners fervently.)

But fear not, reader, we have no intention of treating you to a semi-nautical sermon. Whether you be Christian or not, our desire is simply to paint for you a true picture of life on the North Sea as we have seen it, and, as it were unwise to omit the deepest shadows from a picture, so would it be inexcusable to leave out the highest lights—even although you should fail to recognise them as such.

The discourse was not long, but the earnestness of the preacher was very real. The effect on his audience was varied. Most of them sympathised deeply, and seemed to listen as much with eyes as ears. A few, who had not come there for religious purposes, wore somewhat cynical, even scornful, expressions at first, but these were partially subdued by the manner of the speaker as he reasoned of spiritual things and the world to come.

On deck, Gunter and those who had stayed with him became curious to know what the "preachin'

skipper" was saying, and drew near to the fore-hatch, up which the tones of his strong voice travelled. Gradually they bent their heads down and lay at full length on the deck listening intently to every word. They noted, also, the frequent ejaculations of assent, and the aspirations of hope that escaped from the audience.

Not one, but two or three hymns were sung after the discourse was over, and one after another of the fishermen prayed. They were very loath to break up, but, a breeze having arisen, it became necessary that they should depart, so they came on deck at last, and an animated scene of receiving and exchanging books, magazines, tracts, and pamphlets ensued. Then, also, Gunter got some salve for his shins, Ned Spivin had his cut hand dressed and plastered. Cuffs were supplied to those whose wrists had been damaged, and gratuitous advice was given generally to all to give up drink.

"An' don't let the moderate drinkers deceive you lads," said the skipper, "as they're apt to do—an' no wonder, for they deceive themselves. Moderate drinkin' may be good, for all I know, for old folk an' sick folk, but it's *not* good for young and healthy men. They don't need stimulants, an' if they take what they don't need they're sure to suffer for it There's a terrible *line* in drinkin', an' if you once cross that line, your case is all but hopeless. I once

knew a man who crossed it, and when that man began to drink he used to say that he did it in 'moderation,' an' he went on in 'moderation,' an' the evil was so slow in workin' that he never yet knew when he crossed the line, an' he died at last of what he called moderate drinkin'. They all begin in moderation, but some of 'em go on to the ruin of body, soul, an' spirit, rather than give up their moderation! Come now, lads, I want one or two o' you young fellows to sign the temperance pledge. It can't cost you much to do it just now, but if you grow up drinkers you may reach a point—I don't know where that point lies—to come back from which will cost you something like the tearing of your souls out o' your bodies. You'll come, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll go," said a bright young fisherman with a frame like Hercules and a face almost as soft as that of a girl.

"That's right! Come down."

"And I've brought two o' my boys," said a burly man with a cast-iron sort of face, who had been himself an abstainer for many years.

While the master of the mission smack was producing the materials for signing the pledge in the cabin, he took occasion to explain that the signing was only a help towards the great end of temperance; that nothing but conversion to God, and

constant trust in the living Saviour, could make man or woman safe.

"It's not hard to understand," he said, looking the youths earnestly in the eyes. "See here, suppose an unbeliever determines to get the better of his besettin' sin. He's man enough to strive well for a time. At last he begins to grow a little weary o' the battle—it *is* so awful hard. Better almost to die an' be done with it, he sometimes thinks. Then comes a day when his temptation is ten times more than he is able to bear. He throws up the sponge; he has done his best an' failed, so away he goes like the sow that was washed to his wallowing in the mire. But he has *not* done his best. He has *not* gone to his Maker; an' surely the maker of a machine is the best judge o' how to mend it. Now, when a believer in Jesus comes to the same point o' temptation he falls on his knees an' cries for help; an' he gets it too, for faithful is He that has promised to help those who call upon Him in trouble. Many a man has fallen on his knees as weak as a baby, and risen up as strong as a giant."

"Here," said a voice close to the speaker's elbow, "here, hand me the pen, an' I 'll sign the pledge."

"What, *you*, Billy Bright!" said the missionary, smiling at the precocious manliness of the little fellow. "Does your father want you to do it?"

"Oh! you never mind what my father wants. He leaves me pretty much to do as I please—except smoke, and as he won't let me do that I mean to spite him by refusin' to drink when he wants me to."

"But I'm afraid, Billy," returned the missionary, laughing, "that that's not quite the spirit in which to sign the pledge."

"Did I say it was, old boy?" retorted Billy, seizing the pen, dabbing it into the ink, and signing his name in a wild straggling sort of way, ending with a huge round blot.

"There, that'll do instead of a full stop," he said, thrusting his little hands into his pockets as he swaggered out of the cabin and went on deck.

"He 'll make a rare good man, or an awful bad 'un, that," said the missionary skipper, casting a kindly look after the boy.

Soon afterwards the boats left the mission smack, and her crew began to bustle about, making preparation to let down the gear whenever the Admiral should give the signal.

"We carry two sorts of trawl-nets, Andrew," said the captain to his mate, who was like-minded in all respects, "and I think we have caught some men to-day with one of 'em—praise the Lord!"

"Yes, praise the Lord!" said the mate, and ap-

parently deeming this, as it was, a sufficient reply, he went about his work in silence.

The breeze freshened. The shades of night gathered; the Admiral gave his signal; the nets were shot, and the Short Blue fleet sailed away into the deepening darkness of the wild North Sea.

CHAPTER X.

A STRONG CONTRAST—A VICTIM OF THE COPER.

BIRDS of a feather flock together, undoubtedly—at sea as well as on land. As surely as Johnston, and Moore, and Jim Frost, and such men, hung about the mission ship—ready to go aboard and "have a little meetin'" when suitable calms occurred, so surely did David Bright, the Swab, and other like-minded men, find themselves in the neighbourhood of the Coper when there was nothing to be done in the way of fishing.

Two days after the events narrated in the last chapter, the Swab—whose proper name was Dick Herring, and who sailed his own smack, the *White Cloud*—found himself in the neighbourhood of the floating grog-shop.

"Get out the boat, Brock," said Herring to his mate—who has already been introduced to the reader as Pimply Brock, and whose nose rendered any explanation of that name unnecessary; "take some fish, an' get as much as you can for 'em."

The Swab did not name what his mate was to procure in barter with the fish, neither did Brock ask. It was an old-established order, well understood.

Soon Brock and two hands were on their way to the floating "poison-shop," as one of the men had named it. He was affectionately received there, and, ere long, returned to the *White Cloud* with a supply of fire-water.

"You're good at a bargain, Brock," said his master, with an approving nod, tossing off a glass of the demon that held him as if in chains of steel—chains that no man could break. "I wish," he added, looking round on the sea wistfully, "that some of our friends would come to join us in a spree."

"So do I," said Brock, slightly inflaming his nasal pimples, by pouring a glass of spirits down his throat.

There must be some strange, subtle sympathy between drunkards, for, at the very time these two men expressed their wish, the master of the *Evening Star* said to Gunter, "Get out the boat. I'll go cruisin'."

It must not be supposed that by this he meant to declare his intention of going off on a lengthened voyage in his little boat. David Bright only meant that, having observed through his telescope the

little transaction between the *White Cloud* and the Coper, his intention was to pay that vessel a visit—to go carousing, or, as the North Sea smacksmen have it, "cruisin'."

Gunter obeyed the order with satisfaction and alacrity.

"Jump in, Spivin, and you come too, Billy."

"I say, father," said the boy in a low voice, "are ye goin' to drink wi' the Swab after what ye heard aboard the mission smack?"

"You clap a stopper on your jaw an' obey orders," replied the skipper angrily.

Although full of light-hearted insolence, which his mates called cheek, Billy was by no means a rebellious boy. He knew, from sad experience, that when his father made up his mind to "go in for a drinking-bout," the consequences were often deplorable, and fain would he have dissuaded him, but he also knew that to persist in opposing him would only make matters worse, and probably bring severe chastisement on himself. With an air of quiet gravity, therefore, that seemed very unnatural to him, he leaped into the boat and took an oar.

"What cheer, David?" said the Swab, offering his rugged hand when the former jumped on the deck of the *White Cloud*. "I thought you'd come."

"You was right, Dick," returned David, shaking the proffered hand.

"Come below, an' wet your whistle. Bring your men too," said Dick. "This is a new hand?" pointing to Ned.

"Ay, he's noo, is Ned Spivin, but he can drink."

"Come down, then, all of 'ee."

Now, Ned Spivin was one of those yielding good-natured youths who find it impossible to resist what may be styled good-fellowship. If you had tried to force Ned Spivin, to order him, or to frighten him into any course, he would have laughed in your face and fought you if necessary; but if you tempted Ned to do evil by kindly tones and looks, he was powerless to resist.

"You 're right, skipper, I can drink—sometimes."

They all went below, leaving Billy on deck "to look after the boat," as his father said, though, being made fast, the boat required no looking after.

Immediately the party in the little cabin had a glass round. Ere long it occurred to them that they might have another glass. Of course they did not require to be reminded of their pipes, and as nearly all the crew was in the little cabin, besides the visitors, the fumes from pipes and glasses soon brought the atmosphere to a condition that would have failed to support any but the strongest kind of human life. It supported these men well enough, however, for they soon began to use their tongues

and brains in a manner that might have surprised a dispassionate observer.

It is, perhaps, needless to say that they interlarded their conversation with fearful oaths, to which of course we can do no more than make passing reference.

By degrees the conversation degenerated into disputation, for it is the manner of some men, when "in liquor," to become intensely pugnacious as well as owlishly philosophical. The subject-matter of dispute may be varied, but the result is nearly always the same—a series of amazing convolutions of the brain, which is supposed to be profound reasoning, waxing hotter and hotter as the utterances grow thicker and thicker, and the tones louder and louder, until the culminating point is reached when the point which could not be proved by the mind is hammered home with the fist.

To little Billy, who had been left in sole charge of the deck, and whose little mind had been strangely impressed on board the mission ship, the words and sounds, to say nothing of the fumes, which proceeded from the cabin furnished much food for meditation. The babel of tongues soon became incessant, for three if not four or five of the speakers had become so impressed with the importance of their opinions, and so anxious to give their mates the benefit, tha they all spoke at once. This of course necessitated

much loud talking and gesticulation by all of them, which greatly helped, no doubt, to make their meaning clear. At least it did not render it less clear. As the din and riot increased so did the tendency to add fuel to the fire by deeper drinking, which resulted in fiercer quarrelling.

At last one of the contending voices shouted so loud that the others for a few moments gave way, and the words became audible to the little listener on deck. The voice belonged to Gunter.

"You said," he shouted fiercely, "that I—"

"No, I didn't," retorted Brock, breaking in with a rather premature contradiction.

"Hear him out. N—nothin' like fair play in ar—argiment," said an extremely drunken voice.

"Right you are," cried another; "fire away, Gunter."

"You said," resumed Gunter with a little more of argument in his tone, though still vehemently, "that I said—that—that—well, whativer it was I said, I 'll take my davy that I niver said anything o' the sort."

"That 's a lie," cried Brock.

"You 're another," shouted Gunter, and waved his hand contemptuously.

Whether it was accident or design we know not, but Gunter's hand knocked the pipe out of Brock's mouth.

To Billy's ear the well-known sound of a blow followed, and he ran to look down into the cabin, where all was instantly in an uproar.

"Choke him off," cried David Bright.

"Knock his brains out," suggested Herring.

Billy could not see well through the dense smoke, but apparently the more humane advice was followed, for, after a good deal of gasping, a heavy body was flung upon the floor.

"All right, shove him into a bunk," cried the Swab.

At the same moment Ned Spivin sprang on deck, and, stretching himself with his arms extended upwards, drew a long breath of fresh air.

"There, Billy," he said, "I 've had enough of it."

"Of grog, d'ye mean?" asked the boy.

"No, but of the hell-upon-earth down there," replied the young man.

"Well, Ned, I should just think you *have* had enough o' that," said Billy, "an' of grog too—though you don't seem much screwed after all."

"I 'm not screwed at all, Billy—not even half-seas-over. It 's more the smoke an' fumes that have choked me than the grog. Come, lad, let 's go for'ard an' git as far from it as we can"

The man and boy went to the bow of the vessel, and seated themselves near the heel of the bowsprit, where the sounds from the cabin reached them only

as a faint murmur, and did not disturb the stillness of the night.

And a day of quiet splendour it certainly was—the sea as calm as glass, insomuch that it reflected all the fleecy clouds that hung in the bright sky. Even the ocean-swell had gone to rest, with just motion enough left to prove that the calm was not a "dead" one, but a slumber. All round, the numerous vessels of the Short Blue fleet floated in peaceful idleness. At every distance they lay, from a hundred yards to the far-off horizon.

We say that they floated peacefully, but we speak only as to appearance, for there were other hells in the fleet, similar to that which we have described, and the soft sound of distant oars could be distinguished now and then as boats plied to and fro between their smacks and the Coper, fetching the deadly liquid with which these hells were set on fire.

Other sounds there were, however, which fell pleasantly on the ears of the two listeners.

"Psalm-singers," said Billy.

"They might be worse," replied Ned. "What smack does it come from, think 'ee?"

"The *Boy Jim*, or the *Cephas*—not sure which, for I can't make out the voices. It might be from the *Sparrow*, but that's it close to us, and there could be no mistake about Jim Frost's voice if he was to strike up."

"What! has Jim Frost hoisted the Bethel flag?"

"Ay, didn't you see it flyin' last Sunday for the first time?"

"No, I didn't," returned Ned, "but I'm glad to hear it, for, though I 'm not one o' that set myself, I do like to see a man not ashamed to show his colours."

The flag to which they referred is supplied at half cost to the fleet by the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen—and is hoisted every Sabbath-day by those skippers in the fleet who, having made up their minds boldly to accept all the consequences of the step, have come out decidedly on the Lord's side.

While the two shipmates were conversing thus in low tones, enjoying the fresh air and the calm influences around them, the notes of an accordion came over the water in tones that were sweetened and mellowed by distance.

"Ha! that's Jim Frost now," said Billy, in subdued excitement, while pleasure glittered in his eyes. "Oh! Ned, I *does* like music. It makes my heart fit to bu'st sometimes, it does. An' Jim plays that—that what 's 'is name—so beautiful!"

"His accordion," said Ned.

"Yes—his accordium—"

"No, Billy, not accord*ium*, but accord*ion*."

"Well, well—no matter. I don't care a button what you calls it, so long as Jim plays it. Why,

he'd make his fortin' if he was to play that thing about the streets o' Lun'on. Listen."

Jim Frost deserved all the praise that the enthusiastic boy bestowed on him, for, besides possessing a fine ear and taste for music, and having taught himself to play well, he had a magnificent tenor voice, and took great delight in singing the beautiful hymns which at that time had been introduced to the fleet. On this particular day he was joined by his crew, whose voices—more or less tuneful—came rolling over the water in a great volume of melody.

"He's got Singin' Peter a-visitin' him," said Billy. "Don't you hear him?"

"Ay, I hear him, boy. There's no mistakin' Singin' Peter's voice. I'd know it among a thousand."

"If it's hell here," remarked Billy, with a great sigh of satisfaction, after the hymn was done, "it do seem like heaven over there. I only wish we had Jim Frost on board of us instead of that brute Gunter."

"Don't be hard on Gunter, Billy," said Ned. "We don't know what he's got to bear. Some men are born, you see, wi' narves that are for ever screwin' at 'em, an' ticklin' of 'em up; an' other men have narves that always keep smoothin' of 'em down. The last are the pleasantest to have to do

with, no doubt, but the others ain't quite so bad as they look sometimes. Their bark is worse than their bite."

"Hush!" exclaimed the boy, holding up a finger at the moment, for Jim Frost's accordion again sent forth its rich tones in the prelude to a hymn. A few moments later and the tuneful voices came rolling towards them in that beautiful hymn, the chorus of which ends:—

"We shall know each other better when the mists are rolled away."

When the last verse was sung little Billy found a tear struggling to get out of each eye, and a lump sticking in his throat, so he turned his head away to conceal them.

"Ain't it beautiful?" he said, when the lump had disappeared.

"And ain't it curious," answered Ned, "that it should touch on what we was talkin' about afore they began? P'r'aps we shall know John Gunter better 'when the mists are rolled away.'"

Billy shook his head dubiously. "I'm not so sure o' that," he said. "Anyhow, there's a deal o' mist to be rolled away before we can know *him* better."

"There's a breeze comin' up from the south'ard," remarked Ned, who, to say truth, did not seem to care very much about getting to know his surly

shipmate better, "we'll have to get your father aboard soon."

"That won't be an easy matter," said Billy, and he was right, for when David Bright was set down with a friend, and a glass, and a pack of cards, it was very difficult to move him. He was, indeed, as fond of gambling as of drinking, and lost much of his hardly earned gains in that way. Billy, therefore, received little but abuse when he tried to induce him to return to his own vessel, but the freshing of the breeze, and a sudden lurch of the smack, which overturned his glass of grog into Gunter's lap, induced him at last to go on deck.

There the appearance of things had changed considerably. Clouds were beginning to obscure the bright sky, the breeze had effectually shattered the clear mirror of the sea, and a swell was beginning to roll the *White Cloud*, so that legs which would have found it difficult to steady their owners on solid land made sad work of their office on the heaving deck.

"Haul up the boat," cried Brock in a drivelling voice as he came on deck; "where are you steerin' to? Let me take the helm.'

He staggered toward the tiller as he spoke, but Dick Herring and one of his mates, seeing that he was quite unable to steer, tried to prevent him.

Brock, however, had reached that stage of drunkenness in which men are apt to become particularly obstinate, and, being a powerful man, struggled violently to accomplish his purpose.

"Let him have it," said Herring at last. "He can't do much damage."

When set free, the miserable man grasped the tiller and tried to steady himself. A lurch of the vessel, however, rendered his effort abortive. The tiller fell to leeward. Brock went headlong with it, stumbled over the side, and, before any one could stretch out a hand to prevent it, fell into the sea and sank.

His comrades were apparently sobered in an instant. There was no need for the hurried order to jump into the boat alongside. Ned Spivin and Billy were in it with the painter cast off and the oars out in a couple of seconds. The boat of the *White Cloud* was also launched with a speed, that only North Sea fishermen, perhaps, can accomplish, and both crews rowed about eagerly while the smack lay-to. But all without success. The unfortunate man was never more seen, and the visitors left the vessel in sobered silence, and rowed, without exchanging a word, to their own smack, which lay about a quarter of a mile distant on the port quarter.

CHAPTER XI.

RUTH AND CAPTAIN BREAM TAKE TO SCHEMING.

RETURNING to London, we will follow Captain Bream, who, one fine morning, walked up to Mrs. Dotropy's mansion at the west end, and applied the knocker vigorously.

"Is Miss Ruth at home?"

Yes, Miss Ruth was at home, and would he walk in.

He was ushered into the library of the mansion; that room in which the Dotropy ancestors, who could not find space among their kindred in the dining-room, held, so to speak, an overflow meeting to themselves. Ruth soon joined him.

"I'm so glad to see you, Captain Bream," she said, shaking with much fervency the hand held out to her. "Sit down. It is so kind of you to come at once to help me in my little schemes—though I have not seen you to explain why I asked you—but, there, I was almost off on another subject before I had begun the one I wish to consult you about. And,

do you know, captain," added Ruth, with a slightly perplexed look, "I find scheming a very troublesome business!"

"I should think you did, Miss Ruth, and it seems to me that it's always better to go straight at what you've got to do without scheming—all fair an' aboveboard. Excuse me, my dear, but an old man who has sailed your lamented father's ships for over thirty years, and known you since you were a baby, may be allowed to say he's surprised that *you* should take to scheming."

"An old man who has not only sailed my dear father's ships for over thirty years," said Ruth, "but has brought me toys from all parts of the world, and has, besides, been as true to the family as the needle to the pole—or truer, if all be true that is said of needles—may say to my father's daughter exactly what he pleases without the smallest chance of giving offence. But, let me tell you, sir, that you are a foolish old man, and much too quick in forming your opinions. Scheming is both justifiable and honourable at times—as I shall soon convince you."

A beaming smile overspread the captain's visage as he said—

"Very well, Miss Ruth. Go on."

"But before I go on tell me how are the Miss Seawards?"

"Quite well, I believe. At least I have no reason to think otherwise. Rather thinnish if anything, but filled out wonderfully since I first saw 'em."

"That 's good," said Ruth, laughing. "And now, do you know why I asked you to go and lodge with them?"

"Well, I always thought it was because you knew I wanted a lodgin', though I confess it has puzzled me to make out why you wanted me to come to such an out-o'-the-way part o' the city; and, to tell you the truth, it *is* rather inconvenient, but your letter was so urgent, Miss Ruth, that I knew you must have some good reason, and as your dear father's daughter has a right to command me, I obeyed, as you know, without question."

"You are a good old man," returned Ruth, laying her hand on the brown fist of the captain and looking up in his face with the same loving girlish look that she had bestowed on him many a time in years past on his frequent visits with foreign toys, "and I shall test your goodness a good deal before I have done with you."

"Test away, Miss Ruth. You'll find I can stand a good deal of testin'. I haven't sailed the salt sea for forty years for nothing."

"Well then," said Ruth, looking slightly perplexed again. "What would you do, Captain Bream, if you knew of two ladies who were unable to work,

or to find suitable work, and so poor as to be literally starving—what would you do?"

"Give 'em money, of course."

"But suppose that, owing to some delicacy of feeling, or, perhaps, some sort of mistaken pride, they would not accept money, and flushed very much and felt hurt if you ventured to offer it to them?"

"Why, then, I'd send 'em victuals."

"But suppose," continued Ruth, "that there were great difficulties in the way of doing that, and they felt as much objection to receive gratuitous victuals as money, what would you do then? you would not let them starve, would you?"

"Of course not," returned the captain, promptly. "If it fairly came to that, I'd be apt to treat 'em as nurses do obstinate infants and castor oil. I'd take 'em on my knee, force open their mouths, and shove the victuals down their throats."

Ruth burst into a merry little laugh at this.

"But," said she, "don't you think that, before proceeding to such forcible treatment, you might scheme a little to get them to take it willingly, as nurses sometimes disguise the taste of the oil with coffee or milk?"

"Well, you *might* scheme a little on that sort of principle, Miss Ruth; but in ordinary cases I prefer straightforward plans myself."

"Then why, let me ask," said Ruth with some

severity in her look, "do you dare to scheme with the wind as you and all sailors do when it is dead against you?"

"You 're becomin' too deep for me now, my dear, what d'ee mean?"

"When the wind blows dead against you, say from the north," replied Ruth, "don't you begin your naughty—at least your nautical—scheming at once? Don't you lay your course to the nor'-west and pretend you are going in *that* direction, and then don't you soon tack about—isn't that what you call it—and steer nor'-east, pretending that you are going *that* way, when all the time you are wanting to go due north? What do you call that, sir, if it is not scheming to circumvent the wind?"

While she was speaking, Captain Bream's smile expanded and broke forth at last in one of his bass broadsides of laughter, which gave Ruth great delight, for she had, as a little girl, enjoyed these thunderous laughs excessively, and her taste for them had not departed.

"Well, my dear," said her visitor, "I admit that there are some sorts o' fair-an'-aboveboard schemin' which ain't dishonourable, or unworthy of a British sailor."

"Very good," returned Ruth; "then listen while I reveal some of my recent scheming. Some time ago I found out that two very dear friends of mine—who

were in delicate health and quite unable to work hard, as well as being unable to find any kind of work whatever—were on the point of starvation. They would not accept money. I schemed a little to get them to earn money, but it was not easy, and the result was not a sufficiently permanent income. At last I thought I would try to get them a boarder—a somewhat rich boarder, whose powerful appetite and large meals might leave some crumbs for—"

"You don't mean to tell me, Miss Ruth," interrupted the captain, in amazement, "that the Miss Seawards were in a state of starvation when I went to 'em!"

"Indeed I do," replied Ruth; "at least as nearly in that state as was compatible with existence."

"Well, well," said the captain, "no wonder they looked so thin; and no wonder they 're beginnin' to be a little better in flesh now, wi' the legs o' mutton an' chops an' suchlike things that I get in to take the edge off my appetite—which, as you justly observe, Miss Ruth, is not a bad one. I 'm glad you 've told me this, however, for I 'll go in for extra heavy feedin' now!"

"That 's right. But stay, Captain Bream, I have not nearly done with my scheming yet. And I shall still want you to help me."

"Go ahead, my dear. I 'm your man, for, to tell 'ee the downright truth, I 've taken a great fancy

to these two sisters, an' would steer a long way out o' my course to help 'em."

"I knew you would," returned Ruth with a little look of triumph. "Whoever comes in contact with these dear friends of mine thinks exactly as you do. Now, their health is not nearly as good as it ought to be, so I want them to have a change of air. You see, the poor little street in which they live is not the freshest in London."

"Exactly so. They want a trip to Brighton or Broadstairs or Ramsgate, and a whiff of fresh sea-air, eh?" said the captain with a look of satisfaction.

"No not to these places," said Ruth; "I thought of Yarmouth."

"Well, Yarmouth—just as good. Any part o' the coast will do to blow the London cobwebs out o' their brains—say Yarmouth."

"Very good, captain, but my difficulty is how to manage it."

"Nothing easier, Miss Ruth. I will take an afternoon train, run down, hire a lodgin', come up to-morrow, an' carry the Miss Seawards off wi' me."

"But suppose they won't go?"

"But they must go. I 'm quite able to take up one under each arm an' carry 'em off by force if they won't."

"I would highly approve of that method, captain, if it were possible, but I 'm afraid such things are

not permitted in this free country. No, if done at all, the thing must be gone about with a little more care and delicacy."

"Well then, I 'll go down an' take a lodgin', an' write up and ask them to pay me a visit for the benefit of their health."

Ruth shook her pretty little head and frowned.

"Won't do," she said. "I know them too well. They 're so unselfish that they won't budge a step to benefit themselves."

"H'm! I see, Miss Ruth, we want a little scheming here—eh? Well, I 'll manage it. You leave this little matter in my hands, and see if I don't get 'em to visit Yarmouth, by hook or by crook. By the way, Miss Ruth, was it one o' your little schemes, givin' 'em these mitts and comforters to make?"

"Of course it was, Ruth replied with a laugh and a blush. "You see these things are really very much wanted by the North-sea fishermen, and a great many benevolent women spend much time in knitting for them—and not only women, but also boys."

"Boys!" echoed the captain in surprise—"boys knit mitts and comforters?"

"Yes. I assure you that the telegraph boys of the Notting Hill branch of the Post-office have actually spent some of their spare time in doing this work."

"I'll look upon telegraph boys with more respect ever after this," said the captain with emphasis.

"Well, as I was saying," continued Ruth, "Mamma bought far more worsted for me than I could ever find time to work up into mitts or comforters, so I have employed the Miss Seawards to do it for me —at so much a pair. But they don't know it's for me, so be careful not to—"

"Yes, yes, I see—more scheming. Well, I'll take care not to blab."

"And I sent the worsted and arranged the transaction through such a dear pretty little fisher-boy from Yarmouth. But perhaps you have seen him at your lodging."

"No, I haven't seen him, but I've heard a good deal about him. The ladies seem to be as much impressed with his sweetness and prettiness as yourself, Miss Ruth. For my part, I'm not over fond o' sweet pretty boys. I prefer 'em rough-cast, or even ugly, so long's they 're smart an' willin'."

"Oh! but you have no idea what a smart and willing boy he is," said Ruth, firing up in defence of her little friend. "I assure you he is most willing and intelligent, and I do believe he would scratch his face and twist his little nose into a screw if by so doing he could make himself ugly, for I have observed that he is terribly annoyed when people call him pretty—as they often foolishly do."

"Well, I 'll be off now on this little business," said the captain, rising and smoothing his hat with his cuff. "But—but—Miss Ruth—excuse me, you said something about sending the Miss Seawards a *rich* lodger when you sent me. How d'ee know I 'm rich?"

"Well, I only guessed it," returned Ruth with a laugh, "and, you know, more than once you have hinted to me that you had got on very well—that God had prospered you—I think these were the words you have sometimes used."

"These are the words I would always use," returned the captain. "The prosperity that has attended me through life I distinctly recognise as being the result of God's will, not of my wisdom. Don't we see that the cleverest of men sometimes fail, and, on the other hand, the most stupid fellows sometimes succeed? It is God that setteth up one and putteth down another."

"I'm glad to hear that you think so clearly on this point, captain, though I did not know it before. It is another bond between us. However, if I have been wrong in supposing you to be rich, I—"

"Nay, I did not deny it, Miss Ruth, but it does not follow that a man means to say he is rich when he says that he has got on very well. However, my dear, I don't mind tellin' you, as a secret, that I *am* rich—as rich, that is, as there 's any use to be,

an' far richer than I deserve to be. You must know," continued the captain, sinking his voice to a hoarse whisper, "that your dear father used to allow me to put my savin's into his hands for investment, and the investments succeeded so well that at last I found myself in possession of five—hundred—a year!"

Captain Bream said this with much deliberation and an emphatic nod for each word, while he gazed solemnly in Ruth's face. "Not a bad fortune for an old bachelor, eh? Then," he continued, after a moment's pause, "when I was wrecked, two years ago in Australia, I took a fancy to have a look at the gold diggin's, so off I went to Bendigo, and I set to work diggin' for the mere fun o' the thing, and the very first day I turned up a nugget as big as my fist, and two of the same sort the day after, an' then a lot o' little ones; in fact I had got hold of a first-rate claim, an' when I had dug away for a month or so I put it all in a big chest, sold the claim, and came straight home, bringin' the chest with me. I have it now, up in my cabin yonder. It well-nigh broke my back gittin' it up the stair, though my back ain't a weak one."

"And how much is the gold worth?" eagerly asked Ruth, who had listened with a sympathetic expression on her face.

"That's more than I can tell. I scarce know

how to go about convertin' it into cash; but I 'm in no hurry. Now mind, Miss Ruth, not a word o' this to any livin' soul. Not even to your own mother, for she ain't *my* mother, d'ee see, an' has no right to know it. In fact I 've never told it to any one till this day, for I have no one in the wide world to care about it. Once, indeed, I had—"

He stopped short.

"Ah! you are thinking of your sister?" said the sympathetic Ruth; "the sister whom you once told me about long ago."

"Yes, Miss Ruth, I *was* thinkin' o' her; but—" He stopped again.

"Do tell me about her," said Ruth, earnestly. Has she been long dead?"

"Dead! my dear. I didn't say she was dead. an' yet it ain't unlikely she is, for it 's long, long since I heard of her. There 's not much to tell about her after all," said the captain, sadly. "But she was a dear sweet little girl at the time—just turned eighteen—an' very fond o' me. We had no parents living, an' no kindred except one old aunt, with whom my sister lived. I was away at the time on a long voyage, and had to take a cargo from the East Indies to China before returnin' home. At Hongkong I fell ill, an' was laid up there for months. Altogether a good many troubles came on me at that time—though they were blessed troubles to me. for they

ended in the saving o' my soul through my eyes bein' opened to see my sins and Jesus Christ as my Saviour. It was three years before I set foot in England again, and when I got back I found that my old aunt was dead, and that my dear sister had married a seaman and gone away—no one knew where."

"And you 've never heard of her since?" asked Ruth.

"Never."

"And don't know who she married?"

"Know nothin' more about her, my dear, than I've told 'ee. Good-bye now, Miss Ruth. I must look sharp about this business of yours."

He showed such evident disinclination to continue the painful subject, that Ruth forbore to press it, and they parted to prosecute their respective schemes.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN BREAM DEVELOPS A CAPACITY FOR SCHEMING.

AT dinner that day Captain Bream paused in the act of conveying a whole potato to his mouth on the end of his fork, and said—

"Miss Seaward, I 'm going to leave you—"

"Leave us!" cried Kate, interrupting him with a look of consternation, for she and Jessie had both become so fond of the amiable seaman, with the frame of Goliath and the heart of Samuel, that they were now as much afraid of losing, as they had formerly been of possessing him. "Leave us, captain!"

"Only for a time, Miss Kate—only for a time," he replied, hastily, as he checked the power of further utterance with the potato. "Only for a time," he repeated, on recovering the power. "You see, I 've got a little bit of business to transact down at Yarmouth, and it will take me a good while to do it. Some weeks at the least—perhaps some months—but there 's no help for it, for the thing *must* be done."

The captain said this with so much decision, that Kate could scarcely forbear laughing as she said—

"Dear me, it must be very important business since you seem so determined about it. Is there anything or any one likely to oppose you in transacting the business?"

"Well, not exactly at present," returned the captain blandly, "but there are two obstinate friends of mine who, I have been told, would oppose me pretty stoutly if I was to tell 'em all the truth about it."

"Is there any necessity," asked Jessie, "for telling these obstinate friends anything about the business at all?"

"Well, yes," replied the captain with a chuckle that almost brought on a choking fit; "I can't well avoid tellin' them somethin' about it, for they've a right to know, but—"

"Wouldn't it save you all trouble, then," broke in Kate, seeing his hesitation, "to tell them just as much of the business as they were entitled to know, and no more?"

"That's just the very thing I mean to do," replied the captain, bursting into a laugh so deep and thunderous that the small domestic, Liffie Lee, entered the room abruptly to ask if anything was wanted, but in reality to find out what all the fun was about.

Having been dismissed with a caution not to intrude again till rung for, the captain helped himself to an enormous slice of beef; earnestly, but unsuccessfully, pressed the sisters to "go in for more and grow fat," and then continued his discourse.

"You must know, ladies, that I have taken to studyin' a good deal in my old age. Another potato —thank 'ee."

"Yes, we have observed that," said Kate. "May I ask what is the nature of your studies—navigation?"

"Navigation!" shouted the captain with another laugh so rich and racy that poor Liffie Lee almost entered in defiance of orders; "no, Miss Kate, it ain't navigation! I've bin pretty well grounded in that subject for the last forty years. No, my study *now* is theology."

"Theology!" exclaimed the sisters in surprise.

"Yes, theology. Is it so strange, then, that a man drawin' near the close of life should wish to be more particular than when he was young in tryin' to find out all he can about his Maker?" returned the captain gravely.

"Forgive us," said Jessie, hastening to explain; "it is not that. If you had said you had taken to reading the Bible carefully and systematically, we would not have been surprised, but it—it was—your talking so quietly about theology that made us—"

"Yes, yes, I see," interrupted the good-natured seaman; "well, it *is* reading the Word of God that I mean. You see, I regard the Bible as my class-book, my book o' logarithms, chart, compass, rudder, etc., all rolled into one. Now, I don't mind tellin' you a secret. When I first went to sea I was a very wild harum-scarum young fellow, an' havin' some sort of influence over my mates, I did 'em a deal of damage and led 'em astray. Well, when the Lord in His great mercy saved my soul, I could not forget this, and although I knew I was forgiven, my heart was grieved to think of the mischief I had done. I felt as if I would give anything in life to undo it if I could. As this was not possible, however, I bethought me that the next best thing would be to do as much good as I could to the class that I had damaged, so, when I came home and left the sea for good, I used to go down about the docks and give away Bibles and Testaments to the sailors. Then I got to say a word or two to 'em now and then about their souls; but I soon found that there are professed unbelievers among the tars, an' they put questions that puzzled me at times, so I took to readin' the Bible with a view to answering objectors an' bein' able to give a reason of the hope that is in me—to studyin', in fact, what I call theology. But I ain't above takin' help," continued the captain with a modest look, "from

ordinary good books when I come across 'em—my chief difficulty bein', to find out what are the best books to consult, and this has led me sometimes to think of buyin' up all the theological books I can lay hands on, an' glancin' 'em all through so as to make notes of such as seemed worth readin' with care. The labour however seems so great, that up to now I've bin kept back, but I've had a talk with a friend to-day which has decided me, so I'll go off to Yarmouth to-morrow an' buy a whole lot o' theological books—a regular library in fact—and set to work to read up. But there's one thing I would like, which would save me an enormous amount o' labour, if I could get it."

"What is that?" asked the sisters, eagerly, and in the same breath, for they had become quite interested in their friend's aspirations.

"I would like," said the captain, slowly, and fixing his eyes on his plate, for he was now beginning to scheme, "I would like to find some one—a clever boy perhaps, though a girl would be preferable—who would take the trouble off my hands of glancin' through the books first, an' makin' notes of their contents for me, so as to prevent my wastin' time on those that are worthless."

"I fear," said Jessie, "that few boys or girls would be capable of such work, for it would require

not only intelligence but a considerable amount of scriptural knowledge."

The captain heaved a deep sigh. "Yes," he said, shaking his head slowly, "you're right, and I'm afraid I'll have to get some grown-up person to help me, but that won't be easy. And then, d'ee know, I don't feel as if I could git on in such investigations with a stranger."

"What a pity," said Kate, "that you could not bring the books here, and then *I* could help you, for although I do not pretend to be deeply learned in scriptural knowledge, I daresay I know enough for your purpose; but why not get the books in London? Is there any necessity for buying them in Yarmouth?"

Poor Captain Bream was so unused to scheming, that he had made no preparation for such a question, and felt much confused. He could give no good reason for making his purchase in Yarmouth, and nothing would have induced him to tell a falsehood.

"Well, really," he said, after a few moments' hesitation, "there are circumstances sometimes in a man's life which render it difficult for him to explain things, but—but I *have* a reason for wishin' to buy this library in Yarmouth, an' it seems to me a good one. Besides, I've got a likin' for sea-air, bein' my native air, so to speak, and I've no doubt that theology would come more easy to me if I was

in a snug little room facin' the sea, where I could see the blue waters dancin', an' the shipping go by, an' the youngsters playin' on the sands. Yes, it *must* be done at Yarmouth. London would never do; it's too hot an' stuffy. Not that I care for that, but then you might—ah—that is—I mean to say—you might agree with me on this point if you were there. But why," he added with fresh animation as he saw the way opening up before him, "why, Miss Kate, since you are so kind as to say you'd like to help me, why might you not take a run down to Yarmouth with me, an' help me there?"

"Because," answered Kate, laughing, "I could not very well leave my sister alone."

"Of course not—quite right, but there's no need for that, she could come too, and it would do you both much good, not to speak o' the *immense* advantage to me! I do assure you I'd feel well-nigh as helpless as an infant, if left to tackle this business alone."

From this point there began a regular skirmish between the captain and the sisters; the one trying to convince the others that it would be doing him a favour for which he could never find words to thank them, and the others endeavouring to show by every sort of argument that the thing was utterly impossible, that the captain little knew what a burden

he proposed to take on his shoulders, and that there was no use whatever in talking about it.

But Captain Bream was a man of resolution. He stuck to his point, and pleaded his own cause so powerfully that the sisters began to waver.

"But think," urged Kate, who did the most of the fighting, "you forget Liffie Lee. She is no longer a mere visitor for an hour or two of a morning, as she used to be, but a regular hired servant, and we could not leave her behind."

"I know that. It was my coming that made you hire her; and, now I think of it, I've a right to claim at least part of her, so she can come too, an' we'll lock up the house an' get Mr. Green-grocer to look after it—air it now and then. Come, just make up your minds. Only think, how beautiful the blue sea will be just now, and the sunny skies an' the yellow sands—I declare it makes me long to go. An' then you'll see that pretty boy you've taken such a fancy to—what's 'is name?"

"Billy Bright," said Kate.

"Just so—Billy Bright—though I can't say that I'm over fond o' pretty little boys. They're too often soft an'—"

"But I tell you he's as bold as a lion, and wise as a man, and tough as—as—"

"As a beefsteak," said the captain; "yes, yes, I know all that, and I'm quite prepared to believe that

he is an exception. Well, now, it 's agreed to—is it?"

But the sisters did not at once give in. They fought on with true feminine courage until the captain tried the effect of deep dejection and innocent submission, when their tender hearts could stand out no longer, and, hauling down their colours, they finally agreed to become librarians and accompany their lodger to Yarmouth.

Then the captain left them to report the victory to his commodore, Ruth Dotropy.

"I never had such a battle in my life!" he said to that scheming young creature. "They didn't give in till they 'd fired off every shot in their locker. Trafalgar and the Nile were nothin' to it."

"But do you really mean to say," asked Ruth, who could hardly speak at first for laughing, "that you intend to buy all these theological books and set the sisters to work?"

"To be sure I do. You didn't suppose that I was goin' to tell a parcel o' lies to help out your schemes, my dear? It has been for some months past simmerin' in my brain that I ought to go through a small course of education in that line. And all you have done for me is to make me go in for it somewhat sooner, and a little heavier than I had intended in the way of books. And there 's no doubt I 'll study better at the sea-side than in

London. Besides, I shall have the fishermen to try the effects of my studies on, and you may be sure I won't let the poor things work too hard at the books."

"I 'll trust you for that," said Ruth.

Now, while these little plans were being arranged an event was pending in the North Sea fleet which merits particular notice.

CHAPTER XIII.

RUN DOWN IN A FOG—CAPTAIN BREAM ACTS SURPRISINGLY.

ONE day a fishing smack was on the eve of quitting the Short Blue fleet for its little holiday of a week in port. It was the *Sparrow*, of which Jim Frost was master. A flag was flying to indicate its intention, and invite letters, etc., for home, if any of the crews should feel disposed to send them.

Several boats put off from their respective smacks in reply to the signal. One of these belonged to Singing Peter.

"Glad to see you, Peter," said Jim Frost, as the former leaped on the *Sparrow's* deck.

"Same to you, lad. I wish you a pleasant spell ashore, and may the Master be with you," returned Peter.

"The Master is sure to be with me," replied Frost, "for has he not said, 'I will never leave thee'? Isn't it a fine thing, Peter, to think that whatever happens the Lord is here to guard us from evil?"

"Ay, Jim, an to take us home when the time comes."

"'Which is far better,'" responded Jim.

"You'll not get away to-night," remarked Peter as he gazed out upon the sea. "It's goin' to fall calm."

"No matter. I can wait."

"What say ye, lad, to a hymn?" said Peter.

"I'm your man," replied Jim, with a laugh, "I thought it wouldn't be long before Singin' Peter would want to raise his pipe."

"He can't help it, d'ee see," returned Peter, answering the laugh with a smile; "if I didn't sing I'd blow up. It's my safety-valve, Jim, an' I like to blow off steam when I gets alongside o' like-minded men."

"We're all like-minded here. Fetch my accordion," said Jim, turning to one of his men.

In a few minutes a lively hymn was raised in lusty tones which rolled far and wide over the slumbering sea. Then these like-minded men offered up several prayers, and it was observed that Jim Frost was peculiarly earnest that night. Of course they had some more hymns, for as the calm was by that time complete, and it was not possible for any sailing vessel to quit the fleet, there was no occasion to hurry. Indeed there is no saying how long these iron-framed fishermen would have kept it up, if it had not been for a slight fog which warned the visitors to depart.

As the night advanced the fog thickened, so that it was not possible to see more than fifty yards around any of the fishing smacks.

Now it is probably known to most people that the greatest danger to which those who do business on the sea are exposed is during fog.

When all around is calm and peaceful; when the sound of voices comes with muffled sound over the smooth water; when the eye sees nothing save a ghostly white horizon all round close at hand; when almost the only sound that breaks on the ear is the gentle lipping of the sea, or the quiet creak of plank and spar, as the vessel slowly lifts and falls on the gentle swell, and when landsmen perchance feel most secure—then it is that the dark cloud of danger lowers most heavily, though perhaps unrecognised, over the mariner, and stirs him to anxious watchfulness, when apparently in profoundest repose.

Jim Frost knew well the dangers of the situation, but he had been long accustomed to face all the dangers peculiar to his calling on the deep without flinching—strong in the confidence of his well-tried courage and seamanship, and stronger still in his trust in Him who holds the water in the hollow of His hand. Many a time had he been becalmed in fog on the North Sea. He knew what to do, kept the fog-horn blowing, and took all the steps for safety that were possible in the circumstances.

But, somehow, the young fisherman did not feel his usual easy-going indifference on that particular night, though his trust in God was not less strong. He felt no fear, indeed, but a solemn sobriety of spirit had taken the place of his wonted cheery temperament, and, instead of singing in lively tones as he paced the deck, he hummed airs of a slow pathetic kind in a soft undertone.

It is often said that men receive mysterious intimations, sometimes, of impending disaster. It may be so. We cannot tell. Certainly it seemed as if Jim Frost had received some such intimation that night.

"I can't understand it, Evan," he said to his mate when the latter came on deck a little after midnight to relieve him. "A feeling as if something was going to happen has taken possession of me, and I can't shake it off. You know I 'm not the man to fancy danger when there 's none."

Evan—a youth whom he had been the means of rescuing when about to fall, under great temptation—replied that perhaps want of sleep was the cause.

"You know," he said, "men become little better than babbies when they goes long without sleep, an' you 've not had much of late. What with that tearin o' the net, an' the gale that 's just gone, an' that book, you know—"

"Ah!" interrupted Jim, "you mustn't lay the

blame on the book, Evan. I haven't bin sittin' up *very* late at it; though I confess I'm uncommon fond o' readin'. Besides, it's a good book, more likely to quiet a man's mind than to rouse it. How we ever got on without readin' before that mission ship came to us, is more than I can understand! Why, it seems to have lifted me into a new world."

"That's so. I'm fond o' readin' myself," said Evan, who, although not quite so enthusiastic or intellectual as his friend, appreciated very highly the library-bags which had been recently sent to the fleet.

"But the strange thing is," said Jim, returning to the subject of his impressions—"the strange thing is, that my mind is not runnin' on danger or damaged gear, or books, or gales, but on my dear wife at home. I've bin thinkin' of Nancy in a way that I don't remember to have done before, an' the face of my darlin' Lucy, wi' her black eyes an' rosy cheeks so like her mother, is never absent from my eyes for a moment."

"Want o' sleep," said the practical Evan. "You'd better turn in an' have a good spell as long as the calm lasts."

"You remember the patch o' green in front o' my cottage in Gorlston?" asked Jim, paying no attention to his mate's advice.

"Yes," answered Evan.

"Well, when I was sittin' for 'ard there, not half-an-hour since, I seed my Nancy a-sittin' on that green as plain as I see you, sewin' away at somethin', an' Lucy playin' at her knee. They was so real-like that I couldn't help sayin' 'Nancy!' an' I do assure you that she stopped sewin' an' turned her head a-one side for a moment as if she was listenin'. An' it was all so real-like too."

"You was dreamin'; that was all," said the unromantic Evan.

"No, mate. I wasn't dreamin'," returned Jim. "I was as wide awake as I am at this moment, for I was lookin' out all round just as keen as if I had not bin thinkin' about home at all."

"Well, you 'd as well go below an' dream about 'em now if you can," suggested Evan, "an' I 'll keep a sharp look-out."

"No, lad, I can't. I 'm not a bit sleepy."

As Jim said this he turned and went to the bow of the smack.

At that moment the muffled sound of a steamer's paddles was heard. Probably the fog had something to do with the peculiarity of the sound, for next moment a fog-whistle sounded its harsh tone close at hand, and a dark towering shadow seemed to rush down upon the *Sparrow*.

Even if there had been a breeze there would have been no time to steer clear of the danger.

As it was, the little vessel lay quite helpless on the sea. Evan shouted down the companion for the men to turn out for their lives. The man at the bow sounded the fog-horn loud and long. At the same instant Jim Frost's voice rang out strong and clear a warning cry. It was answered from above. There were sudden screams and cries. The fog-whistle shrieked. Engines were reversed. "Hard a-port!" was shouted. Steam was blown off, and, amid confusion and turmoil indescribable, an ocean steamer struck the little *Sparrow* amidships, and fairly rammed her into the sea.

It could scarcely be said that there was a crash. The one was too heavy and the other too light for that. The smack lay over almost gracefully, as if submitting humbly to her inevitable doom. There was one great cry, and next moment she was rolling beneath the keel of the monster that had so ruthlessly run her down.

Not far off—so near indeed that those on board almost saw the catastrophe—lay the *Evening Star*. They of course heard the cries and the confusion, and knew only too well what had occurred.

To order out the boat was the work of an instant. With powerful strokes Joe, Spivin, Trevor, and Gunter, caused it to leap to the rescue. On reaching the spot they discovered and saved the mate. He was found clinging to an oar, but all the others

had disappeared. The steamer which had done the deed had lowered a boat, and diligent search was made in all directions round the spot where the fatal collision had occurred. No other living soul, however, was found. Only a few broken spars and the upturned boat of the smack remained to tell where Jim Frost, and the rest of his like-minded men, had exchanged the garb of toil for the garments of glory!

As a matter of course this event made a profound impression for a time on board of the *Evening Star* and of such vessels as were near enough next morning to be informed of the sad news. A large portion of the fleet, however, was for some time unaware of what had taken place, and some of the masters and crews who were averse to what they styled "psalm-singin' and prayin'," did not seem to be much affected by the loss.

Whether grieved or indifferent, however, the work of the fleet had to be done. Whether fishermen live or die, sink or swim, the inexorable demand of Billingsgate for fish must be met! Accordingly, next day about noon, a fresh breeze having sprung up, and a carrier-steamer being there ready for her load, the same lively scene which we have described in a previous chapter was re-enacted, and after the smacks were discharged they all went off as formerly in the same direction, like a shoal of herrings, to new fishing-grounds.

When they had got well away to the eastward and were beating up against a stiff northerly breeze, David Bright, who stood near the helm of the *Evening Star*, said to his son in a peculiarly low voice—

"Now, Billy, you go below an' fetch me a glass of grog."

Billy went below as desired, but very unwillingly, for he well knew his father's varying moods, and recognised in the peculiar tone in which the order was given, a species of despondency—almost amounting to despair—which not unfrequently ushered in some of his worst fits of intemperance.

"Your fadder's in de blues to-day," said Zulu, as he toiled over his cooking apparatus in the little cabin; "when he spok like dat, he goes in for heavy drink."

"I know that well enough," returned Billy, almost angrily.

"Why you no try him wid a 'speriment?" asked the cook, wrinkling up his nose and displaying his tremendous gums.

"For any sake don't open your mouth like that, Zulu, but tell me what you mean by a 'speriment,'" said the boy.

"How kin I tell what 's a 'speriment, if I'm not to open my mout?"

"Shut up, you nigger! an' talk sense."

"Der you go agin, Billy. How kin I talk sense

if I 'm to shut up? Don't you know what a 'speriment is? Why it 's—it 's—just a 'speriment, you know—a dodge."

"If you mean a dodge, why don't you say a dodge?" retorted Billy; "well, what is your dodge? look alive, for daddy 'll be shoutin' for his grog in a minute."

"You jus' listen," said the cook, in a hoarse whisper, as he opened his enormous eyes to their widest, "you jus' take a wine-glass—de big 'un as your fadder be fond of—an' put in 'im two teaspoonfuls o' vinegar, one tablespoonful o' parafine hoil, one leetle pinch o' pepper, an' one big pinch ob salt, with a leetle mustard, an' give 'im dat. Your fadder never take time to smell him's grog—always toss 'im off quick."

"Yes, an' then he 'd toss the wine-glass into my face an' kick me round the deck afterwards, if not overboard," said Billy, with a look of contempt. "No, Zulu, I don't like your 'speriment, but you 've put a notion into my head, for even when a fool speaks a wise man may learn—"

"Yes, I often tink dat," said the cook, interrupting, with a look of innocence. "You quite right, so speak away, Billy, an' I 'll learn."

"You fetch me the wine-glass," said the boy, sharply.

Zulu obeyed.

"Now, fill it up with water—so, an' put in a little brown sugar to give it colour. That 's enough, stir him up. Not bad rum—to *look* at. I 'll try father wi' that."

Accordingly, our little hero went on deck and handed the glass to his father—retreating a step or two, promptly yet quietly, after doing so.

As Zulu had said, David Bright did not waste time in smelling his liquor. He emptied the glass at one gulp, and then gazed at his son with closed lips and gradually widening eyes.

"It 's only sugar and water, daddy," said Billy, uncertain whether to laugh or look grave.

For a few moments the skipper was speechless. Then his face flushed, and he said in a voice of thunder, "Go below an' fetch up the keg."

There was no disobeying *that* order! The poor boy leaped down the ladder and seized the rum-keg.

"Your 'speriment might have been better after all, Zulu," he whispered as he passed up again, and stood before his father.

What may have passed in the mind of that father during the brief interval we cannot tell, but he still stood with the empty wine-glass in his hand and a fierce expression on his face.

To Billy's surprise, however, instead of seizing the keg and filling out a bumper, he said sternly—"See here," and tossed the wine-glass into the sea. "Now

lad," he added, in a quiet voice, "throw that keg after it."

The poor boy looked at his sire with wondering eyes, and hesitated.

"Overboard with it!" said David Bright in a voice of decision.

With a mingling of wild amazement, glee, and goodwill, Billy, exerting all his strength, hurled the rum-keg into the air, and it fell with a heavy splash upon the sea.

"There, Billy," said David, placing his hand gently on the boy's head, "you go below and say your prayers, an' if ye don't know how to pray, get Luke Trevor to teach you, an' don't forget to thank God that your old father's bin an' done it at last."

We are not informed how far Billy complied with these remarkable orders, but certain we are that David Bright did not taste a drop of strong drink during the remainder of that voyage. Whether he tasted it afterwards at all must be left for this chronicle to tell at the proper time and place.

At present it is necessary that we should return to Yarmouth, where Captain Bream, in pursuance of his deep-laid schemes, entered a bookseller's shop and made a sweeping demand for theological literature.

"What particular work do you require, sir?" asked the surprised and somewhat amused bookseller.

"I don't know that I want any one in particular,"

said the captain, "I want pretty well all that have bin published up to this date. You know the names of 'em all, I suppose?"

"Indeed no, sir," answered the man with a look of uncertainty. "Theological works are very numerous, and some of them very expensive. Perhaps if—"

"Now, look here. I've got neither time nor inclination to get upon the subject just now," said the captain. "You just set your clerk to work to make out a list o' the principal works o' the kind you've got on hand, an' I 'll come back in the evenin' to see about it. Never mind the price. I won't stick at that—nor yet the quality. Anything that throws light on religion will do."

"But, sir," said the shopman, "some of the theological works of the present day are supposed—at least by the orthodox—to throw darkness instead of light on religion."

"All right," returned the captain, "throw 'em all in. I don't expect divines to agree any more than doctors. Besides, I've got a chart to steer by, called the Bible, that 'll keep me clear o' rocks an' shoals. You make your mind easy, an' do as I bid you. Get the books together by six o'clock this evening, an' the account made out, for I always pay cash down. Good-day.'

Leaving the bookseller to employ himself with this astounding "order," Captain Bream next went

to that part of the town which faces the sea-beach, and knocked at the door of a house in the window of which was a ticket with "lodgings" inscribed on it.

"Let me see your rooms, my good girl," said the captain to the little maid who opened the door.

The little maid looked up at the captain with some surprise and no little hesitancy. She evidently feared either that the rooms would not be suitable for the applicant, or that the applicant would not be suitable for the rooms. She admitted him, however, and, leading him up-stairs, ushered him into the parlour of the establishment.

"Splendid!" exclaimed the captain on beholding the large window, from which there was seen a glorious view of the sea, so near that the ships passing through the deep water close to the beach seemed as if they were trying which of them could sail nearest to land without grounding.

"Splendid!" he repeated with immense satisfaction as he turned from the view to the room itself; "now this is what I call fortunate. The very thing—sofa for Miss Jessie—easy chair for Miss Kate—rocking chair for both of 'em. Nothin' quite suitable for me (looking round), but that's not difficult to remedy. Glass over the chimney to see their pretty faces in, and what have we here—a press?"

"No, sir," said the little maid, pushing open the door, "a small room off this one, sir."

"Glorious!" shouted the captain, entering and striking the top of the doorway with his head in doing so. "Nothing could be better. This is the theological library! Just the thing—good-sized window, same view, small table, and—well, I declare! if there ain't *empty* bookshelves!"

"Very sorry, sir," said the little maid, hastening to apologise; "we have no books, but they'll be handy for any books you may bring to the sea-side with you, sir, or for any little knick-knacks and odds and ends."

"Yes, yes, my good girl. I'll fetch a few theological odds and ends to-night that'll p'r'aps fill 'em up. By the way, you've a bedroom, I hope?"

He looked anxious, and the maid, who seemed inclined to laugh, said that of course they had, a nice airy bedroom on the same floor on the other side of the passage—also commanding the sea.

The captain's face beamed again.

"And now, my girl—but, by the way, I shall want another bedroom. Have you—"

"I'm sorry to say that we have not. The rest of the house is quite full."

Captain Bream's face again became anxious. "That's bad," he said; "of course I can get one out o' the house, but it would be inconvenient."

"There *is* a hattic, sir," said the maid, "but it is 'igh up, and so very small, that I fear—"

"Let me see the attic," said the captain, promptly.

The maid conducted him up another flight of steps to a room, or rather closet, which did not appear to be more than five feet broad and barely six feet long; including the storm-window, it might have been perhaps seven feet long. It was situated in a sort of angle, so that from the window you could have a view of a piece of slate roof, and two crooked chimney pots with a slice of the sea between them. As there was much traffic on the sea off that coast, the slice referred to frequently exhibited a ship or a boat for a few seconds.

"My study!" murmured the captain, looking round on the bare walls, and the wooden chair, and a low bedstead which constituted the furniture. "Not much room for the intellect to expand here! However, I 've seen worse."

"We consider it a very good hattic, sir," said the little maid, somewhat hurt by the last remark.

"I meant no offence, my dear," said the captain, with one of his blandest smiles, "only the berth *is* rather small, d'ee see, for a man of my size. It is first-rate as far as it goes, but if it went a little further—in the direction of the sea, you know—it might give me a little more room to kick about my legs. But it'll do. It'll do. I'll take all the rooms, so you'll consider them engaged."

"But you haven't asked the price of 'em yet, sir," said the little maid.

"I don't care tuppence about the price, my dear. Are you the landlady?"

"La! no, sir," replied the girl, laughing outright, as they returned to the parlour.

"Well then, you send the landlady to me, and I'll soon settle matters."

When the landlady appeared, the captain was as good as his word. He at once agreed to her terms, as well as her stipulations, and paid the first week's rent in advance on the spot.

"Now," said he, on leaving, "I'll come back this evening with a lot of books. To-morrow forenoon, the ladies for whom the rooms are taken will arrive, please God, and you will have everything ready and in apple-pie order for 'em. I'll see about grub afterwards, but in the meantime you may give orders to have sent in to-morrow a lot o' fresh eggs and milk and cream—lots of cream—and fresh butter and tea and coffee an' suchlike. But I needn't do more than give a wink to a lady of your experience."

With this last gallant remark Captain Bream left the lodging and strolled down to the sea-beach.

CHAPTER XIV.

RUTH'S HOPES AS TO HER PLOT BRIGHTEN A LITTLE.

"MOTHER," said Ruth one day to her dignified parent, "shall you be soon free of engagements?"

"Yes, probably by the end of next week. Why do you ask?"

"Because I am longing to get away to Yarmouth. I had a letter from dear Kate Seaward to-day. They have been a week in their lodging now, and are enjoying it immensely. Here is the letter. Let me read a bit of it to you. She says: 'You have no idea how much we are charmed with this place. It is a perfect paradise! Perhaps part of our feeling of delight is due to the great change from our smoky little residence in London, but you would not wonder at my enthusiasm if you saw the sweet little window beside which I am writing, and the splendid sea—like a great field of clear glass, which spreads away on all sides to the horizon. Oh! I do love the sea—to look at, I mean. You must not suppose, dear, that I have any love left when I am *on* it. Oh! no. The memory of my

last crossing of the Channel—that dreadful British Channel—is as fresh as if it had happened yesterday—the heaving of the steamer and the howling of the wind, the staggering of the passengers, and the expression of their faces, to say nothing of their colour. And then the sensations! Appalling is a mild word. It is not appropriate. If I might coin a word, horrific seems more suitable. But words utterly fail when deep and powerful sensations are concerned. I do assure you, Ruth, that I was absolutely indifferent as to what should become of me that dreadful day as I lay extended flat on my back on one of the saloon sofas. And when that nurse with the baby was forced by a lurch of the ship to sit down on me, I do believe that I could have thanked her if she had crushed me out of existence. Yes, I hate the sea as a place of residence, but I love it as an object to be looked at, especially when it is calm and glittering, as it now is, in the early morning sun.

"'Talking of the early morning reminds me of good Captain Bream, who is one of the most singular and incomprehensible creatures I ever met with. He is an early riser—not that that makes him singular—but instead of going out to walk he remains up in his pigeon-hole of a room studying theology! And such a miscellaneous collection of books he has got on all sorts of religious controversy! He

say he wants to be able to meet the objections of unbelievers whom he sometimes encounters when preaching to sailors. Jessie and I have heard him preach to a number of sailors and fishermen assembled in an old boat-shed, and you have no idea, Ruth, how delightful it is to hear him. *So* different from what one expected, and so very unlike the preaching of many men. I have often wondered why it is that some men—sensible men, too, in other matters—should think it necessary to talk in a sing-song, or whiny voice, with a pathetic drawl, or through their noses, when they have to speak on religious subjects! I once heard an indignant clergyman say that he thought it was a device of the devil to turn sacred things into ridicule, but I cannot agree with that. It seems to me that men are often too ready to saddle Satan with evil devices which they ought to fix on their own stupid shoulders. Captain Bream simply *talks* when he preaches; just as if he were talking on any business matter of great importance, and he does it so nicely, too, and so earnestly, like a father talking to his children. Many of the rough-looking fishermen were quite melted, and after the meeting a good many of them remained behind to talk with him privately. Jessie and I are convinced that he is doing a great and good work here. But he is a most eccentric man, and seems a good deal perplexed

by his theological studies. The other day Jessie ventured to question him about these, and he became quite energetic as he said :—

"'I tell 'ee what it is, ladies, when I go cruisin' out and in among these theological volumes until I lose my reckoning altogether an' git among shoals an' quicksands that I never so much as heard of before, I just lay hold o' the cable that 's made fast to my sheet-anchor, and I haul in on that. Here is the sheet-anchor, he said, pulling his little Bible from his pocket, the Word of God. That 's it. When I feel how ignorant an' stoopid an' unlearned I am, I just keep haulin' on the cable till I come to some such word as this, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," an' so I 'm comforted an' my mind 's made easy, for, after all we may think and say and read, it *must* come to this—"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Every man must work out his own theology for himself, accordin' to that Word, and I 've worked it out so far by God's blessin', that Jesus Christ—the God-man—is my foundation, the Holy Spirit is my guide, and salvation from sin is my aim and end—not only for myself but for my fellow-sinners.'

"'But I must not go on quoting the Captain's sayings and eccentric doings, else I shall never stop.

"'When are you and your mother coming down? I cannot tell how much we long to have you with us to share in our enjoyment of this charming place. And the fisher-people are so interesting too. I don't wonder you took such a fancy to them. Of course we have not had time to make acquaintance with many of them yet. And Jessie has become so engrossed with the Captain's theological books that I can't tear her away from them. At first she began to inspect their contents with a view to tabulate them and help the captain, but she gets so deep in them that she forgets time altogether, and I have often found her, after having been several hours in the library, sitting there poring over a huge volume without having made a single note or jotting! The captain is quite facetious about it, and said yesterday that if she didn't work a little harder he 'd have to dismiss her from the service an' ship a new hand. Then he dragged us both out for a long walk on the beach. We cannot resist him. Nobody can. And *such* cream as we have! —more like thin butter than cream. And such quantities of it too, for he declares he is very fond of it, and must always have plenty on hand. But I cannot help thinking it is for our sakes he has it, for although he talks much about it and makes great demonstration and noise when he drinks it, he does not really consume much—and you know it

must be drunk by somebody, else it would spoil. Oh! we are having, as the captain himself says, a remarkably jolly time of it here, and only want you to make our happiness complete. But, with all his fun and energy and cheerfulness, I cannot avoid noticing that dear Captain Bream is frequently very pensive and absent. I cannot help thinking sometimes that he is the victim of some secret sorrow.'"

At this point Ruth looked up in her mother's face and burst into a fit of hilarious laughter.

"Only think, mother," she said, "of great big, stout, jolly old Captain Bream having a secret sorrow!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Dotropy in a reproachful tone, "you are too flippant in your references to stout old people. You should remember that even the stoutest of them may once have been thin. And it is not impossible that Captain Bream may still be suffering from unrequited affection, or—"

Again Ruth burst into silvery laughter, but checked it and apologised.

"I can't help it, mother. It does seem so funny to think of Captain Bream having ever been thin, or with hair on his head, or suffering from disappointed love. I wonder that it does not occur to Kate that the good man is perhaps suffering because of the sorrows of others. It would be much more

like his generous and unselfish nature. But now, mother, may I write to Kate and tell her to expect us next week?"

"Yes, I think you may. But why are you in such haste, child?"

"Because I'm burning to clear up that little mystery that I told you of—if indeed it is a mystery, and not a mere fancy."

Ruth sighed as if her spirit were slightly troubled.

"Really, child, you have quite raised my curiosity about that mystery as you call it. Why will you not confide in me?"

"Because I may be all wrong, and when I find out that I'm right—*if* I find out that I'm right—then you shall know all about it."

"And there's that chest, too, that the captain sent here for us to take care of when he left town," continued Mrs. Dotropy, "you make quite a mystery about that too, for I see that you know something about it. If I had not perfect confidence in your heart, child, I should feel quite anxious, for it is the first time in your life that you have concealed anything from me."

"Thank you, mother, for trusting my heart," said Ruth, putting an arm round the dignified lady's neck and kissing her.

"That's all very well, Ruth, but I do not put so much trust in your head."

"I'm sorry for that, mother, but meantime my head says that while it would be wrong in me to keep any secret about myself from you, I have no right to reveal the secrets of others. But about this chest—has the banker sent for it yet?"

"No, not yet, but I expect some one from the bank every minute (she consulted a small jewelled watch), and it is probable that our young friend Mr. Dalton himself may come."

"Mr. Dalton!" exclaimed Ruth, with a sudden flush that might have indicated pleasure or annoyance. Mrs. Dotropy, however, did not observe the flush, but continued—

"The chest seems miraculously heavy. I told James to put it into the store-room, but he could not lift it, although he is a strong man, and had to get the butler's assistance."

At that moment the conversation was interrupted by the door being thrown open, and Mr. Dalton was announced.

He was a young man of handsome face and figure, with dark eyes, short curly hair, and a pleasing address.

Apologising for not being more punctual in calling for the chest, he explained that pressing business had detained him.

"Of course, of course," said Mrs. Dotropy, with the familiarity of an old friend—for such she was

to the youth—"you men of business always carry about that cloak of pressing-business to cover your sins and shortcomings with."

"Nay, you are unjust," said the young man, "I appeal to Miss Ruth. Did I not say to Captain Bream that I might perhaps have difficulty in getting away at the hour named, as it was a business hour, and, the transaction being of a friendly and private nature—"

"My dear sir," interrupted Mrs. Dotropy, "if it is private, pray do not make it public."

"Has not Miss Ruth, then, told you—"

He stopped and looked from one lady to the other.

"Miss Ruth," said that young lady, flushing deeply, "is supposed to know nothing whatever about your transactions with Captain Bream. Shall I go and tell James to carry the box down-stairs, mother?"

Mrs. Dotropy gave permission, and Ruth retired. A few minutes later, young Dalton drove away with the captain's chest of gold.

A week after that, the mother and daughter drove away from the same door to the railway station, and in process of time found themselves one pleasant afternoon at Yarmouth, in the little parlour with the window that commanded the gorgeous view of the sea, taking tea with the captain himself and his friends Jessie and Kate Seaward.

A lodging had been secured quite close to their own by the Dotropys.

"Now," said Ruth to Jessie that evening in private, with flushed cheeks and eager eyes, "I shall be able to carry out my little plot, and see whether I am right, now that I have at last got Captain Bream down to Yarmouth."

"What little plot?" asked Jessie.

"I may not tell you yet," said Ruth with a laugh. "I shall let you know all about it soon."

But Ruth was wrong. There was destined to be a slip 'twixt the cup and her sweet lip just then, for that same evening Captain Bream received a telegram from London, which induced him to leave Yarmouth hastily to see a friend, he said, and keep an old-standing engagement. He promised, however, to be back in two or three days at furthest.

CHAPTER XV.

A CLOUD COMES OVER RUTH'S HOPES, AND DIMS THEIR BRIGHTNESS.

To prevent the reader supposing that there is any deep-laid scheme or profound mystery with which we mean to torment him during the course of our tale, we may as well say at once that the little plot, which Ruth had in view, and which began to grow quite into a romance the longer she pondered it, was neither more nor less than to bring Captain Bream and Mrs. David Bright face to face.

Ruth had what we may style a constructive mind. Give her a few rough materials, and straightway she would build a castle with them. If she had not enough of material, she immediately invented more, and thus continued her castle-building. Being highly imaginative and romantic, her structures were sometimes amazing edifices, at which orthodox architects might have turned up their noses—and with some reason, too, for poor little Ruth's castles were built frequently on bad foundations, and some-

times even in the air, so that they too often fell in splendid ruins at her feet!

It would not be just, however, to say that none of Ruth's buildings stood firm. Occasionally she built upon a good foundation. Now and then she made a straight shot and hit the mark. For instance, the little edifice of cuffs and comforters to the North Sea trawlers survived, and remains to the present day a monument of usefulness (which few monuments are) and of well-placed philanthropy. It may not, perhaps, be just to say that Ruth actually laid the foundation—conceived the first idea—of that good work, but she was at all events among the first builders, became an active overseer, and did much of the work with her own hands. Still, as we have said, too many of Ruth's castles came to the ground, and the poor thing was so well used to the sight of falling material that she had at last begun to be quite expert in detecting the first symptoms of dissolution, and often regarded them with despairing anxiety. It was so with her when Captain Bream was summoned so suddenly away from Yarmouth.

Eagerly, anxiously, had she planned to get him down to that town for the purpose of confronting him with Mrs. David Bright—the reason being that, from various things the captain had said to her at different times, and from various remarks

that Mrs. Bright had made on sundry occasions, she felt convinced that the North Sea fisherman's wife was none other than Captain Bream's long-lost sister!

It would be well-nigh impossible, as well as useless, to investigate the process of reasoning and the chain of investigation by which she came to this conclusion, but having once laid the foundation, she began to build on it with her wonted enthusiasm, and with a hopefulness that partial failure could not destroy.

The captain's departure, just when she hoped to put the copestone on her little edifice was a severe blow, for it compelled her to shut up her hopes and fears in her own breast, and, being of a sympathetic nature, that was difficult. But Ruth was a wise little woman as well as sympathetic. She had sense enough to know that it might be a tremendous disappointment to Captain Bream, if, after having had his hopes raised, it were discovered that Mrs. Bright was *not* his sister. Ruth had therefore made up her mind not to give the slightest hint to him, or to any one else, about her hopes, until the matter could be settled by bringing the two together, when, of course, they would at once recognise each other.

Although damped somewhat by this unlooked-for interruption to her little schemes, she did not allow her efforts to flag.

"I see," she said one day, on entering the theological library, where Jessie, having laid down a worsted cuff which she had been knitting, was deep in Leslie's *Short and Easy method with the Deists*, and Kate, having dropped a worsted comforter, had lost herself in Chalmers's *Astronomical Discourses*. "I see you are both busy, so I won't disturb you. I only looked in to say that I'm going out for an hour or two."

"We are never too busy, darling," said Jessie, "to count *your* visits an interruption. Would you like us to walk with you?"

"N—no. Not just now. The fact is, I am going out on a little private expedition," said Ruth, pursing her mouth till it resembled a cherry."

"Oh! about that little plot?" asked Jessie, laughing. Ruth nodded and joined in the laugh, but would not commit herself in words.

"Now, don't work too hard, Kate," she cried with an arch look as she turned to leave.

"It is harder work than you suppose, Miss Impudence," said Kate; "what with cuffs and contradictions, comforters and confusion, worsted helmets and worse theology, my brain seems to be getting into what the captain calls a sort of semi-theological-lop-scowse that quite unfits me for anything. Go away, you naughty girl, and carry out your dark plots, whatever they are."

Ruth ran off laughing, and soon found herself at the door of Mrs. Bright's humble dwelling.

Now, Mrs. Bright, although very fond of her fair young visitor, had begun, as we have seen, to grow rather puzzled and suspicious as to her frequent inquiries into her past history.

"You told me, I think, that your maiden name was Bream," said Ruth, after a few remarks about the weather and the prospects of the *Short Blue* fleet, etc.

"Yes, Miss Ruth," answered Mrs. Bright; but the answer was so short and her tone so peculiar that poor scheming little Ruth was quelled at once. She did not even dare to say another word on the subject nearest her heart at the time, and hastily, if not awkwardly, changed the subject to little Billy.

Here indeed she had touched a theme in regard to which Mrs. Bright was always ready to respond.

"Ah! he *is* a good boy, is Billy," she said, "an uncommonly good boy—though he is not perfect, by any means. And he's a little too fond of fighting. But, after all, it's not for its own sake he likes it, dear boy! It's only when there's a good reason for it that he takes to it. Did I ever tell you about his kicking a boy bigger than himself into the sea off the end of the pier?"

"No, you never told me that."

"Well, this is how it was. There's a small

girl named Lilly Brass—a sweet little tot of four years old or thereabouts, and Billy 's very fond of her. Lilly has a brother named Tommy, who 's as full of mischief as an egg is full of meat, and he has a trick of getting on the edge of the pier near where they live, and tryin' to walk on it, and encouraging Lilly to follow him. The boy had been often warned not to do it, but he didn't mind, and my Billy grew very angry about it.

"'I don't care about little Brass himself, mother,' said Billy to me one day; 'he may tumble in an' be drownded if he likes, but I'm afeared for little Lilly, for she likes to do what he does.'

"So, one day Billy saw Tommy Brass at his old tricks, with Lilly looking on, quite delighted, and what did my boy do, think ye? He went up to Brass, who was bigger and older than himself, and gave him such a hearty kick that it sent him right off into the sea. The poor boy could not swim a stroke, and the water was deep, so my Billy, who can swim like a fish, jumped in after him and helped to get him safe ashore. Tommy Brass was none the worse; so, after wringing the water out of his clothes, he went up to Billy and gave him a slap in the face. Billy is not a boastful boy. He does not speak much when he 's roused; but he pulled off his coat and gave Brass such a thump on the nose that he knocked him flat on the sand. Up he jumped, however, in

a moment, and went at Billy furiously, but he had no chance. My boy was too active for him. He jumped a' one side, struck out his leg, and let him tumble over it, giving him a punch on the head as he went past that helped to send his nose deeper into the sand. At last he beat him entirely, and then, as he was puttin' on his jacket again, he said—

"'Tommy Brass, it ain't so much on account o' that slap you gave me, that I've licked you, but because you 'ticed Lilly into danger. And, you mark what I say: every time I catch you walkin' on that there pier-edge, or *hear* of you doin' of it, I'll give you a lickin'.'

"Tommy Brass has never walked on that pier-edge since," concluded Mrs. Bright, "but I'm sorry to say that ever since that day Lilly Brass has refused to have a word to say to Billy, and when asked why, she says, ''cause he sowsed an' whacked my brudder Tommy!'"

Thus did Mrs. Bright entertain her visitor with comment and anecdote about Billy until she felt at last constrained to leave without having recovered courage to broach again the subject which had brought her to the fisherman's home.

That same afternoon Mrs. Bright paid a friendly visit to the wife of her husband's mate.

"I can't think whatever Miss Ruth Dotropy is so curious about me for, she's bin at me again," said

Mrs. Bright to Mrs. Davidson, who was busy with her needle on some part of the costume of her "blessed babby," which lay, like an angel, in its little crib behind the door.

"P'r'aps it 's all along of her bein' so interested in you," replied pretty Mrs. Davidson. "She asks me many odd questions at times about myself, and my dear Joe, and the babby—though I admit she don't inquire much about my past life."

"Well, that 's not surprising," said Mrs. Bright with a laugh, as she sat down on a stool to have a chat. "You see, Maggie, you haven't got much of a past life to inquire about, and Joe is such a good man that you 've no call to be suspecting anything; but it wasn't always so with my dear David. I wouldn't say it even to you, Maggie, if it wasn't that everybody in Yarmouth knows it—my David drinks hard sometimes, and although I know he 's as true as gold to me, an' never broke the laws of the land, everybody won't believe that, you know, and the dear man *might* fall under suspicion."

"But you don't suppose, if he did," said Mrs. Davidson, with a look of surprise, "that Miss Ruth would go about actin' the part of a detective, do you?"

"Well, no, I don't," replied her friend, looking somewhat puzzled. "All the same it *is* mysterious why she should go on as she 's bin doin', asking me

what my maiden name was, and who my relations were, and if I ever had any brothers, and when and where I first met wi' David. But whatever her reasons may be I 'm resolved that she 'll get nothing more out of me."

"Of course," returned Maggie, "you must do as you think right in that matter. All I can say is, I would tell Miss Ruth all that was in *my* mind without any fear that she 'd abuse my confidence."

"Ah! Maggie, I might say that too if my mind and conscience were as clear as yours. But they 're not. It is true I have long ago brought my sins to Jesus and had them washed away in His precious blood. And I never cease to pray for my dear David, but—but—"

"Don't you fear, Nell," said Mrs. Davidson, earnestly, and in a tone of encouragement. "Your prayer is sure to be answered."

"Oh! Maggie, I try to believe it—indeed I do. But when I see David go down to that—that public-house, and come up the worse o' liquor, an' sometimes little Billy with him with a cigar in his sweet little mouth an' the smell o' drink on him, my heart fails me, for you know what an *awful* snare that drink is, once it gets the upper hand—and—"

Poor Mrs. Bright fairly broke down at this point for a few seconds; and no wonder, for, not even to her most confidential and sympathetic friend could

she tell of the terrible change for the worse that came over her husband when the accursed fire-water burned in his veins.

"Nell," said Maggie, laying her work in her lap and taking her friend's hand. "Don't give way like that. God would never ask us to pray for one another, if He didn't mean to answer us. Would He, now?"

"That's true, Maggie, that's true," said Mrs. Bright, much comforted. "I never thought of that before. You're young, but you're wise, dear. Of course, the good Lord will never mock us, and if there's anything I have asked for of late, it has been the salvation of David and Billy. What was it, Maggie, that made your Joe first turn his thoughts to the Lord?"

"It was one of his mates. You remember when he sailed wi' that good man, Singin' Peter? Well, Peter used often to speak to him about his soul to no purpose; but that fine man, Luke Trevor, who also sailed wi' Singin' Peter at the time, had a long talk with Joe one night, an' the Holy Spirit made use of his words, for Joe broke down an' gave in. They're both wi' your David and Billy now, so you may be sure they won't throw away the chance they have of speakin' to 'em."

"God grant them success!" murmured Mrs. Bright, earnestly.

"Amen!" responded the younger woman. "But, Nell, you haven't told me yet what you think o' the Miss Seawards."

"Think? I think that next to Miss Ruth they are the sweetest ladies I ever met," returned Mrs. Bright, with enthusiasm. "They are so modest and humble, that when they are putting themselves about to serve you, they almost make you feel that you 're doing them a favour. Don't you remember only last week when they came to see poor Jake's boy that was nearly drowned, and insisted on sitting up with him all night—first one and then the other taking her turn till daylight, because Mrs. Jake was dead-drunk and not able for anything."

"Remember it?" exclaimed Maggie, "I should think I does, and the awful way Mrs. Jake swore at them afore she rightly understood what was wrong."

"Well, did you hear what Mrs. Jake said in the afternoon of that same day?"

"No—except that she was more civil to 'em, so I was told."

"Civil! yes, she was more civil indeed. She'd got quite sober by the afternoon, and the neighbours told her how near the boy was to death, and that the doctor said if it hadn't been for the wise and prompt measures taken by the Miss Seawards before he arrived, he didn't believe the

boy would have lived—when they told her that, she said nothing. When the Miss Seawards came back in the afternoon, they tapped so gently at the door that you would have thought they were beggars who expected a scolding, an' when Mrs. Jake cried out gruffly in her man-like voice, 'Who's that?' they replied as softly as if they had been doing some mischief, 'May we come in?' 'May you come in?' shouted Mrs. Jake, so that you might have heard her half way down the street, as she flung the door wide open, 'may angels from heaven come in? yes, you *may* come in!' an' with that she seized the younger one round the neck an' fairly hugged her, for you see Mrs. Jake has strong feelin's, an' is very fond of her boy, an' then she went flop down on a chair, threw her apron over her head, and howled. I can call it by no other name."

"The poor ladies were almost scared, and didn't seem rightly to know how to take it, and Miss Kate—the younger one you know—had her pretty new summer dress awfully crushed by the squeeze, as well as dirtied, for Mrs. Jake had been washin', besides cleaning up a bit just before they arrived."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Maggie in great admiration. "I always thought there was a soft spot in Mrs. Jake's heart, if only a body could find it out."

"My dear," said Mrs. Bright, impressively, "there's a soft spot I believe in everybody's heart, though in some hearts it's pretty well choked up an' overlaid—"

At that moment a bursting yell from the crib behind the door went straight to the soft spot in Mrs. Davidson's heart, and sank deeply into it.

"That blessed babby!" she cried, leaping up in such haste that her work went into the grate, in which, however, there was happily no fire.

"Oh! my darling! you're Joe to the back-bone—though you *are* a girl—all bounce, an' bang, an' tenderness!"

Seizing the infant in her strong arms she gave it a hug which ought to have produced another yell, but the little one was tough, besides which, she was used to it, and said nothing. The calm did not last long, however. Little Mag, as she was called, felt that her interior somewhere was somehow in want of something, and took the usual way to publish the fact.

After that, conversation became impossible. A storm had burst upon the friends which increased rapidly, so Mrs. Bright rose to say good-bye in the midst of a squall which ought to have blown her through the door-way or out at the window into the street. She was not irritated, however. As she left the house followed by the squall, which was

soon moderated to a stiffish breeze by distance, the sound called up reminiscences of little Billy, and she smiled as she thought of the unvarying continuity of human affairs—the gush of infant memories, and the squalls of other days.

CHAPTER XVI.

TEMPTATION ON THE DEEP.

LET us return once more to the North Sea.

It was drawing towards the close of another fishing period, and the crew of the *Evening Star* were beginning to think of the pleasures of their week on shore when, one afternoon, their vessel found herself becalmed near to the Dutch man-trap—the vessel laden with that greatest of the world's curses —strong drink.

It is usual, we believe, in ordinary warfare, that, on the eve of a great battle, there should be preparations and indications, more or less obvious, of the coming fight; but it is not always so in spiritual warfare. Sometimes the hardest and most important battles of the Great War are fought on unselected ground, the assault having been delivered unexpectedly and when the soul was off its guard, or, perchance, when it was presuming on fancied security, and relying on its own might instead of the strength of the Lord. So it was at this time with David Bright, skipper of the *Evening Star*.

Who would have thought, as he sat that day on the rail of his little vessel, calmly looking out to the horizon in anticipation of a good fishing-breeze, that the mighty forces of Good and Evil were mustering unseen for a tremendous conflict, on which, perchance, the angels were permitted to look down with interest, and that the battle-field was to be the soul of that rugged fisherman of the North Sea! He knew not, little dreamed of, what was pending; but the Captain of his salvation knew it all.

There was but one entrance to that battle-field—the gate of man's Free-will. Through that portal the powers of darkness must enter if they gained admittance at all. Elsewhere the walls were high as heaven, deeper than hell, for, except at this point, the fortress was impregnable.

Yet, although David Bright knew not the power nor the number of the mighty forces that were marshalling, he was not entirely ignorant of the war that was going on. There had been some skirmishing already, in front of the gate, in which he had come off victorious. The demon Habit had assaulted him more than once, and had pressed him sore; for a terrible thirst—such, it is said, as only confirmed drunkards understand—had more than once tormented him. When the first attack was made, the sturdy fisherman stood quietly on his deck with hands in pockets and eyes on the horizon,

looking as if nothing were going on, and he smiled grimly as he muttered to himself rather than to the demon: "Lucky for me that I made Billy heave it overboard!"

"Oh! but," said the demon, "you were a weak fool when you did that. There's the Coper alongside now; go, get another keg. It is cheap, and you can just take a little drop to relieve that desperate craving. Come, now, be a man, and show that you have powers of self-restraint. You have always boasted of the strength of your will, haven't you? Show it now."

"Ay, an' prove the strength of my will," replied David, with another grim smile, "by givin' in to *your* will. No, devil! I *am* a fool, but not quite such a fool as that comes to."

The demon fell back at that and left him.

On the next attack the skipper was worn out with fatigue and watching. They had had a long spell of dirty weather. Work of the hardest kind —even for a hardy frame—had been done, and there was still work to do, and David's great physical powers were well-nigh used up. The gear was down, and a stiff nor-'west breeze not only drove the smack over the surging waves, but caused her to plunge into them like a wild horse bridled and held back.

"You can't hold out much longer at this rate,'

whispered the demon. "Take a drop just by way of a medicine to keep you awake and tide you over this bout; and, by good luck, your man Gunter has some grog left in that bottle he got yesterday from the Coper."

"Billy," said David, in a quiet voice, without deigning a reply to his foe, "Billy, my lad, you fetch me a pot o' coffee or tea—whatever's ready, an' let it be hot."

"Yes, father," said Billy, hastening smartly to obey, for he had a very slight suspicion of the conflict that was raging, though his conceptions were far, far short of the reality.

The demon received a staggering blow that time, and he slunk away scowling when he noted the gleam of satisfaction on the victor's face as he handed back the empty pot to his son.

Warfare! yes, little do those who are "dead in trespasses and sins," and those who swim gaily with the current of self-indulgence, know of the ferocious fights, the raging storms, that are going on all round them on battle-grounds which, to all outward appearance, are calm and undisturbed.

But we have said that this was merely skirmishing outside the gate.

It was not till the afternoon referred to at the beginning of this chapter that the grand assault was made.

On that day the skipper of the *Evening Star* had been subjected to more than ordinary troubles. In the first place, he had brought up a dead man in his net along with the fish—a by no means unknown incident in trawl-fishing experience, for bodies of men who have been washed out of vessels in gales, or drowned in other ways, are sometimes entangled in the gear and brought to the surface. At other times bales and boxes—goods that have been cast away or wrecked—are fished up in this way.

Being in a depressed state of mind, the sight of the dead man made David uncomfortable for a time, but, having thrown the corpse overboard again, he soon forgot it. The next thing that happened was the fishing up of an enormous mass of wreckage, which tore the net almost to pieces, and compelled him to bend on a new one. This was not only a heavy loss of itself, but entailed the loss of the fish that would otherwise have been in the net, and poor David Bright, already at zero in his spirits, sank considerably below that point.

But the final disaster was reserved for a later hour. The new net had been shot, and one of the best banks of the fishing-ground had been gone over. The breeze which had carried the fleet along was just beginning to die down when the Admiral made the signal to haul up.

To work they went, therefore—all through the fleet—to hoist in the harvest of the deep.

It was slow and weary work, as well as hard, that hauling in of the great cable with its gear. Between two or three hours they laboured and toiled at it, while the thick veins stood out like cords on the men's necks, and beads of perspiration trickled down their brows.

"It's goin' to be a big haul, father," said Billy, as the crew stopped for a few moments to rest.

"P'r'aps another lump of wreck," replied the skipper, somewhat bitterly.

"I hope not," returned Billy, in a cheery voice, resuming his work of passing the warp down below as it came off the capstan.

At last the end of the bridle came inboard, and the fishermen knew that their toil, for that time at least, was drawing to a close. Excitement of a mild type began to arise in the enthusiastic and hopeful among them.

"Now, boys, heave away," said Joe Davidson, setting the example.

"It seems unwillin' to come, don't it," growled Gunter.

"Dat's 'cause him full ob fishes," said Zulu; "heave away, boys—altogidder!"

He strained with all his might. So did the rest

of the crew. Round went the capstan, and in a few minutes the great forty-eight feet beam appeared. This was soon hoisted up by means of tackle, and made fast to the side, and then began the hauling in—we might almost say clawing in—of the net, hand over hand, until the cod-end was visible near the surface. It now became evident that a grand haul had indeed been made, and that it had been the mere weight of the fish that had delayed them so long.

Great was the anxiety of course to secure the prize, and energetic the action displayed. Zulu, being the most active and cat-like, was ordered to pass a rope round the net to which a powerful double block was applied.

"Haul away now, boys," said the skipper, whose spirits were somewhat revived by the sight.

Soon the great balloon-shaped cod-end with its solid mass of fish rose slowly into the air, and some of the men laid hold to be ready to swing it inboard and deposit it on the deck, when, suddenly, the stout rope that bound the lower end of the bag gave way. The entire mass of fish dropped back into the sea, and sank to the bottom!

For a few seconds dead silence ensued, while the men glanced at the empty cod-end, and at each other. Then a terrible oath burst from John Gunter, and a sort of sigh broke from some of the others, as if

words were incapable of expressing their feelings—as, indeed, they were! The skipper was standing by the companion hatch at the moment with a handspike in his grasp. A deep-toned curse issued from his lips when the fish went down, and he dashed the handspike to the deck with fearful violence.

Once again, at this critical moment, the demon ventured to raise his head.

"The Coper's close on the port bow!" he whispered; "go, drown it all in grog, man, and be jolly!"

Jolly! How many men have cast away their souls for the sake of what is implied in that little word!

And now, alas! the gate of man's Free-will was creaking on its hinges. No created power above or below could have moved that gate save the power of David Bright himself.

"Shove out the boat!" shouted the miserable man, with a fierceness of expression and tone that there was no misunderstanding. Poor Billy understood it well enough.

"Oh! no, father! Don't do it, father!" he cried in an entreating voice; but already the little boat was dancing on the waves alongside, with John Gunter in her.

"Jump in, Luke," said Joe Davidson, hastily, for

he was anxious that at least one trusty man should be of the party.

Luke jumped in at once, and was instantly followed by Billy. The painter was cast off, and they pulled towards the floating grog-shop.

The tempter received them with a hearty salute.

"Cheap spirits an' cheap baccy!" said John Gunter, as he sat on the rail of the Coper drinking the one and smoking the other, "that's what I likes, an' plenty of both."

"That's so, John," returned David Bright, who sat beside him, and, having already drained several bumpers of the fiery fluid, had quite got over his troubles. "You an' I are of the same mind, John; nevertheless you're a great sulky-faced humbug for all that!"

"What d'ee mean by that?" demanded Gunter, who was becoming rapidly drunk and quarrelsome.

"What do I mean? why, I mean that you're the best man in the smack, out o' sight, an' it's a rare pity that your mother hasn't got half-a-dozen more like you. If she had I'd man the *Evening Star* with your whole family. Here, give us a hold o' your grapplin'-iron, old man."

He seized Gunter's fist as he spoke, and gave it a shake so hearty and powerful, that he almost hurled that lover of cheap grog and baccy overboard.

"Hold on, skipper!" growled the fisherman, who was for a moment uncertain whether to return the friendly grasp or fight; but the fierce, wild, contemptuous laugh with which David Bright concluded the speech decided him.

"Y—you—you're a jolly good fellow," he stammered; "here, fill up again."

The poor skipper filled up again, and again, until his speech began to grow thick and unsteady.

"Yesh," continued Gunter, doubling his fist and smiting his knee, "I do like sheap grog an' sheap baccy, an' the Coper's the place to get 'em both. Ain't it?"

He looked up sharply at the owner of the Coper, who stood in front of him, and who of course assented cheerfully to the question.

"Ain't it?" he repeated still more sharply, turning to Luke Trevor, who sat close to him with a grave, anxious look. "Why don't you drink?" he added.

"Because I don't want to," returned Luke, quietly.

"D — do — don't want to," returned Gunter, angrily—for it takes little to make some drunk men angry—"You don't want to spend your money, you young miser—that's what you m—mean. An' yet it's sheap enough, I'm sure. You'll not git anything in the fleet so sheap as you will in the Coper."

"There you are wrong," returned Luke, decidedly. "You'll get things cheaper aboard the mission ship, for they'll give you physic, an' books, an' good advice, and help as far as they can, all for nothing—which is cheaper than the Coper's wares."

"Right you are, Luke. Pitch into him," cried David Bright, who was fast drinking himself into a state of madness.

"Father," whispered Billy, with an anxious look, "don't you think you've had enough?"

The reply to this was a tremendous cuff on the ear which sent the poor boy staggering backwards, so that he nearly fell. Recovering himself he retired behind the Coper's boat and tried to crush down the sobs that rose in his throat. He was to some extent successful, but a few tears that could not be restrained hopped over his sunburnt cheeks.

It was not pain, nor even the indignity, that drew forth those tears and choking sobs, but the thought that the father he was so fond of had dealt the blow.

Meanwhile Luke Trevor, who felt that matters had reached a dangerous point, rose and went to the place where the boat's painter had been tied. David Bright was sitting close to the spot.

"Don't you think it is time we were going, skipper?" he said, respectfully, as he laid his hand on the rope.

"No, I don't," replied the skipper, sharply. "Leave go that rope."

Luke hesitated. Instantly the enraged skipper leaped up and struck him a blow on the chest which knocked him down. At the same moment, observing that Gunter looked on with a leer of drunken amusement, he transferred his wrath to him, flung the remains of the spirits he had been drinking in the man's face, and made a rush at him. Fortunately Gunter, who had risen, staggered and fell, so that the skipper missed his aim and tumbled over him. In a moment Gunter had regained his feet and prepared for combat, but his adversary's head had struck on the side of the vessel, and he lay stunned and helpless on the deck.

Luke, who had recovered almost immediately, now assisted Gunter and Billy to raise the prostrate man. It was not an easy matter to handle one whose frame was so heavy, but with the assistance of the owner of the Coper they managed it.

"It's only a slight cut," said Billy, looking anxiously round at Trevor.

"Ay, lad, it ain't the cut or the blow as keeps him down, but the grog. Come, we must git him aboard sharp. Haul up the boat, Gunter, while I stop the leak in his skull."

With a kerchief, Luke soon bound up the slight wound that the wretched man had received, and

then they tried to rouse him, but the effort was in vain. David did indeed recover sufficient intelligence to be able to bellow once or twice for more grog, but he could not be brought to the condition of helping himself in any way.

"What'll we do, Luke?" asked Billy, in a tone and with a look of deep distress, as the huge form of his father lay, a scarcely animate mass, on the deck at his feet. "We *must* get him aboard somehow."

"Never fear, Billy, my boy," said Luke, cheerfully, "we'll get him aboard somehow. It's not the first time I've had to do it. Come along, Gunter, lend a hand."

"Not I!" said Gunter, with a drunken swagger. "*I'm* not goin' for an hour or more."

"Oh yes, you are," returned Luke, dipping one of the Coper's buckets over the side and pulling it up full of water.

"No, I ain't. Who'll make me?"

"I will," said Luke, and he sent the contents of the bucket straight into his comrade's face.

"Hooray!" shouted Billy, convulsed at once with delight and surprise at the suddenness of the act, to say nothing of its violence. "Give it 'im, Luke—polish 'im off!"

Luke did not, however, take the pugnacious boy's advice; instead of awaiting the attack of the enraged Gunter, he ran laughing round the capstan and

defied him to catch him. Gunter soon found, after bruising his shins and elbows, and stumbling over ropes, etc., that the effort was hopeless, and gave it up.

"But I'll pay you off w'en I gits a hold of 'ee, Luke. You make sure o' that," he growled as he gave up the chase.

"All right, Gunter; I'll give you a chance to-morrow, lad, if you'll only bear a hand wi' the skipper just now."

Without another word Gunter, who was somewhat sobered by the cold bath, went to where the skipper lay, and attempted to raise him. Being joined by the others the skipper was rolled to the side of the vessel, and then lifted in a half-sitting position on to the rail, where he was held in the grasp of Gunter and the Coper's skipper, while Luke and Billy jumping into the boat, hauled it close under the spot

There was what Billy called a "nasty jobble of a sea on," so that many difficulties met in the job they had in hand. These may be best stated by the actors themselves.

"Now then, boy, haul up a bit—ever so little, there; too much; ease off a bit. Hold on!" "All right, Luke, but she pitches about so, that a feller can't hit the exact spot."

"Look out now, Gunter," said Luke; "let 'im go so as he'll come plump into my arms. Not too soon,

else you 'll stand a chance o' sendin' us both through the bottom of the boat."

"No, nor yet too late," cried the anxious Billy, "else he 'll go flop into the sea!"

It was nervous work, for if he should go flop into the sea he would have been certain to go down like a stone.

One or two attempts were made. The boat, rising up from a hollow in the sea to a height of several feet, surged close to where the men with their drunken burden stood.

"Look out!" cried Luke, with arms extended and ten fingers in a claw-like position.

"Now then," growled Gunter.

But the treacherous wave fell short, and David Bright was on the point of being dropt into the sea when his friends' fingers clawed him back to safety.

"Better make fast a rope to him," suggested Billy, in breathless anxiety.

The skipper of the Coper acted on the advice at once, and made the end of a rope fast round Bright's waist.

Again the boat rose, surged seaward, then swooped towards the Coper, against which it would have been dashed but for the strong arms of Luke. It rose so high that the drunk man was for a moment on a level with the gunwale. It was too good a chance to be missed.

"Shove!" roared Gunter.

Over went the skipper into the arms of Luke, who lost his balance, and both rolled into the bottom of the boat as it sank into the succeeding hollow.

The danger being past, poor Billy signalised the event, and at the same time relieved his feelings, with a lusty cheer.

In a very short time Joe Davidson steered the *Evening Star* close to their tossing boat. Billy stood ready with the painter, and the instant the sides touched, he was over the rail like a monkey and made fast.

The taking of the drunk man out of the boat was by no means so difficult as getting him into it had been. Joe, Luke, Spivin, and Zulu, as well as Billy, leaned over the side of the smack, with their ten arms extended and their fifty fingers curled like crabs' claws or grappling-irons, ready to hook on and hold on. David Bright's extended and helpless form was held in position by Gunter. When it came within reach the fifty fingers closed; the boat surged away, and David was safe though still held in suspense over the deep.

But that was only for a moment. A good heave placed him on the vessel's rail, and another laid him on the deck.

"Brought on board his own smack like a dead pig!" muttered Gunter, whose anger at the skipper rekindled when he saw him once more in safety.

"He's fifty times better than you, even as he lies, you surly old grampus," cried Billy, with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

"Come, Billy," said Joe Davidson, kindly, "lend a hand, boy, to carry him below. It's a sad breakdown, but remember—he's not past redemption. Come."

Four of the fishermen raised the skipper in their strong arms, and conveyed him to his own bunk, where they left him to sleep off the effects of his debauch.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONVERSE IN THE CABIN—THE TEMPTER AGAIN—AN ACCIDENT.

ONE night, some days after the incident just recorded, the *Evening Star* shot her gear, in obedience to orders, on the port hand, and proceeded, with the rest of the fleet, to give a pressing invitation to those fish which inhabited that particular shoal in the North Sea known to fishermen by the name of Skimlico. The name, when properly spelt, runs thus: Schiermonik-oog. But our fishermen, with a happy disregard of orthography, and, perhaps, with an eye to that brevity which is said to be the soul of wit, prefer to call it Skimlico.

When the gear was down the men retired to their little cabin to refresh themselves with a meal and a pipe.

The skipper, who had recovered neither his spirits nor his self-respect since his recent fall, preferred to remain on deck. Billy, who had never lost either, joined the revellers below—with all the more satisfaction that Evan, the rescued mate of the *Sparrow*, was with them.

"Out o' the road, Zulu," cried Ned Spivin, pushing the cook aside, and sitting down close to the fire, "I 'll have a bit o' fish."

He stuck on the end of his knife a piece of sole, out of which the life had barely departed, and held it up before the fire to roast.

"Hand me a mug o' tea, an' a biscuit, Zulu," said Joe Davidson; "fill it up, boy. I like good measure."

"Are them taters ready?" asked Luke Trevor.

"An' the plum-duff? You haven't got any for us to-day, have 'ee?"

"Shut up!" cried Zulu. "How many hands you tink I 've got?"

"Eight at the very least," said Spivin, "an' I can prove it."

"How you do dat?" asked Zulu, opening up his great eyes.

"Easy. Hold out your paws. Isn't that one hand?" (pointing to his left.)

"Yes."

"An' doesn't that make two hands?" (pointing to his right.)

"Yes."

"Well, ain't one hand and two hands equal to three hands, you booby? an' don't you know that monkeys have hands instead o' feet? So as you 're a monkey, that 's six hands. And haven't you a

hand-some face, an' a *hand*-some figgur, which is eight, you grampus! Come, use one o' your many hands an' pass the biscuits."

"Sartinly!" said Zulu, at once kicking a small bit of biscuit which Spivin still held in his hand to the other end of the cabin, where it fell into the lap of Trevor, who thanked Zulu kindly, and ate it up.

"Oh! forgib me, massa," cried Zulu, in mock repentance. "I's nebber nebber do it again! But you know you ax me to use one o' my hands to pass de biskit. Well, I 'bey orders. I use 'im, an' pass de biskit on to Luke."

"Come, Ned, Zulu 's more than a match for you there. Let him alone," cried Joe Davidson, "an' don't be so stingy with your sugar, Zulu. Here, fill up again."

The conversation at this point became what is sometimes styled general, but was interrupted now and then, as one and another of the men dropped into the anecdotal tone, and thus secured undivided attention for a longer or shorter space according to his powers in story-telling.

"What a appetite you've got, Luke," said Joe, as he helped his comrade to a second large plateful of salt beef, potatoes, and duff.

"Hold on, Joe! I 've a pretty fair appetite, but am not quite up to that."

"Nonsense, Luke, you've only got to try. A man has no notion what 'e can do till 'e tries."

"Ah, that's true," said Ned Spivin, checking a lump of salt beef on the end of his clasp-knife half way to his mouth; "did I ever tell 'ee, lads, that little hanecdote about a man we called Glutton, he was such an awful eater?"

"No, never heard on it," said several voices.

"Well, then, this is 'ow it was," said Spivin, clearing his voice. "You must know, I was once in Callyforny, where all the goold comes from. Me an' most o' my mates had runned away from our ship to the diggin's, you see, which of course none on us would have thought of doin'—oh dear no—if it hadn't bin that the skipper runned away too; so it was no use for us to stop behind, d'ee see? Well, we was diggin' one day, in a place where there was a lot o' red Injins—not steam engines, you know, but the sort o' niggers what lives out there. One o' them Injins was named Glutton—he was such an awful eater—and one o' my mates, whose name was Samson, bet a bag o' goold-dust, that he'd make the glutton eat till he bu'sted. I'm afeard that Samson was groggy at the time. Howiver, we took him up, an' invited Glutton to a feast next day. He was a great thin savage, over six futt high, with plenty breadth of beam about the shoulders, and a mouth that seemed made a' purpus for shovellin'

wittles into. We laid in lots of grub because we was all more or less given to feedin'- an' some of us not bad hands at it. Before we began the feast Samson, who seemed to be repentin' of his bet, took us a-one side an' says, 'Now mind,' says he, 'I can't say exactly *how* he 'll bu'st, or *when* he 'll bu'st, or what sort of a bu'st he 'll make of it.' 'Oh, never mind that,' says we, laughin'. 'We won't be partickler how he does it. If he bu'sts at all, in any fashion, we 'll be satisfied, and admit that you 've won.'

"Well, we went to work, an' the way that Injin went in for grub was quite awful. You wouldn't have believed it if you 'd seen it ('p'r'aps not,' said Zulu, with a grin), an' when we 'd all finished we sat glarin' at him, some of us half believin' that he 'd really go off, but he took no notice. On he went until he 'd finished a small leg o' pork, two wild-ducks, six plover, eight mugs o' tea, an' fifteen hard-boiled eggs. But there was no sign o' bu'stin'. Glutton was as slim to look at as before he began. At this pint Samson got up an' went out o' the hut. In a minute or so he came back with a bark basket quite shallow, but about fourteen inches square, an' full of all kinds of eggs—for the wild-birds was breedin' at the time. 'What 's that for?' says we. 'For Glutton, when he 's ready for 'em,' says he. 'There 's six dozen here, an' if that don't do it, I 've

got another basket ready outside.' With that he sets the basket down in front o' the Injin, who just gave a glance at it over a goose drumstick he was tearin' away at. Well, Samson turned round to sit down in his place again, when somethin' or other caught hold of his foot, tripped him up, an' down he sat squash! into the basket of eggs. You niver did see sich a mess! There was sich a lot, an' Samson was so heavy, that the yolks squirted up all round him, an' a lot of it went slap into some of our faces. For one moment we sat glarin', we was so took by surprise, and Glutton was so tickled that he gave a great roar of laughter, an' swayed himself from side to side, an' fore an' aft like a Dutchman in a cross sea. Of course we joined him. We couldn't help it, but we was brought up in the middle by Samson sayin', while he scraped himself, 'Well, boys, I've won.' 'Won!' says I, 'how so? He ain't bu'sted yet.' 'Hasn't he?' cried Samson. 'Hasn't he gone on eatin' till he bu'sted out larfin?' We was real mad at 'im, for a' course that wasn't the kind o' bu'stin we meant; and the end of it was, that we spent the most o' that night disputin' the pint, whether Samson had lost or won. We continued the dispute every night for a month, an' sometimes had a free fight over it, by way of a change, but I don't think it was ever settled. Leastways it wasn't up to the time when I left the country."

"Here, Zulu, hand me a mug o' tea," said Billy Bright, "the biggest one you 've got."

"What's make you turn so greedy?" asked Zulu.

"It 's not greed," returned Billy, "but Ned's little story is so hard an' tough, that I can't get it down dry."

"I should think not. It would take the Glutton himself to swallow it, with a bucket of tea to wash it down," said Luke Trevor.

At this point the conversation was interrupted by an order from the skipper to go on deck and "jibe" the smack, an operation which it would be difficult as well as unprofitable to explain to landsmen. When it was completed the men returned to the little cabin, where conversation was resumed.

"Who 'll spin us a *yarn* now, something more believable than the last?" asked Billy, as they began to refill pipes.

"Do it yourself, boy," said Joe.

"Not I. Never was a good hand at it," returned Billy, "but I know that the mate o' the *Sparrow* there can spin a good yarn. Come, Evan, tell us about that dead man what came up to point out his own murderer."

"I 'm not sure," said Evan, "that the story is a true one, though there 's truth at the bottom of it,

for we all know well enough that we sometimes pick up a corpse in our nets."

"Know it!" exclaimed Joe, "I should think we do. Why, it 's not so long ago that I picked one up myself. But what were ye goin' to say, mate?"

"I was goin' to say that this yarn tells of what happened long before you an' me was born; so we can't be wery sure on it, you know."

"Why not?" interrupted Ned Spivin. "The battle o' Trafalgar happened long before you an' me was born; so did the battle o' Waterloo, yet we 're sure enough about them, ain't we?"

"Right you are, Ned," returned Evan; "it would be a bad look-out for the world if we couldn't believe or prove the truth of things that happened before we was born!"

"Come, shut up your argiments," growled Gunter, "an' let Evan go on wi' his yarn."

"Well, as I was agoin' to say," resumed Evan, "the story may or may not be true, but it 's possible, an' it was told to me when I was a boy by the old fisherman as said he saw the dead man hisself. One stormy night the fleet was out—for you must know the fishin' was carried on in the old days in the same way pretty much, though they hadn't steamers to help 'em like we has now. They was goin' along close-hauled, with a heavy sea on, not

far, it must have been, from the Silver Pits—though they wasn't discovered at that time."

We may interrupt Evan here, to explain that the Silver Pits is a name given to a particular part of the North Sea which is frequented by immense numbers of soles. The man who by chance discovered the spot kept his secret, it is said, long enough to enable him to make a considerable amount of money. It was observed, however, that he was in the habit of falling behind the fleet frequently, and turning up with splendid hauls of "prime" fish. This led to the discovery of his haunt, and the spot, named the Silver Pits, is still a prolific fishing-ground.

"Well," continued Evan, "there was a sort of half furriner a-board. He wasn't a reg'lar fisherman—never served his apprenticeship to it, you know,—an' was named Zola. The skipper, whose name was John Dewks, couldn't abide him, an' they often used to quarrel, specially when they was in liquor. There was nobody on deck that night except the skipper and Zola, but my old friend—Dawson was his name—was in his bunk lyin' wide awake. He heard that Zola an' the skipper was disputin' about somethin', but couldn't make out what was said—only he know'd they was both very angry. At last he heard the skipper say sharply—

"'Ha! would you dare?'

"'Yes, I vill dare,' cries Zola, in his broken English, 'I vill cut your throat.' With that there seemed to be a kind of scuffle. Then there was a loud cry, and Dawson with the other men rushed on deck.

"'Oh!' cried Zola, lookin' wild, 'de skipper! him fall into de sea! Quick, out wid de boat!'

"Some ran to the boat, but the mate stopped 'em. 'It 's no use, boys. She couldn't live in such a sea, an' our poor skipper is fathoms down by this time. It would only sacrifice more lives to try.' 'This was true,' Dawson said, 'for the night was as dark as pitch, an' a heavy sea on.'

"Dawson went to the man an' whispered in his ear, 'You know you are lying, Zola; you cut the skipper's throat.'

"'No, I didn't; he felled over-board," answered the man in such an earnest tone that Dawson's opinion was shook. But next day when they was at breakfast, he noticed that the point of Zola's clasp-knife was broken off.

"'Hallo! Zola," says he, 'what 's broke the point of your knife?'

"The man was much confused, but replied quickly enough that he broke it when cleaning fish—it had dropped on the deck an' broke.

"This brought back all Dawson's suspicion, but as he could prove nothing he thought it best to hold

his tongue. That afternoon, however, it fell calm, an' they found themselves close aboard of one o' the smacks which had sailed astern of them on the port quarter durin' the night. She appeared to be signallin', so the mate hove-to till he came up.

"'We've got the body o' your skipper aboard,' they said, when near enough to hail.

"Dawson looked at Zola. His lips were compressed, and he was very stern, but said nothin'. Nobody spoke except the mate, who told them to shove out the boat and fetch the body. This was done, and it was found that the poor man had been wounded in the breast. 'Murdered!' the men whispered, as they looked at Zola.

"'Why you looks at me so?' he says, fiercely; 'skipper falls over an' sink; git among wrecks at de bottom, an' a nail scratch him.'

"Nobody answered, but when the corpse was put down in the hold the mate examined it and found the broken point of Zola's knife stickin' in the breast-bone.

"That night at supper, while they were all eatin' an' talkin' in low tones, the mate said in an easy off-hand tone, 'Hand me your knife, Zola, for a moment.' Now, his askin' that was so natural-like that the man at once did what he was asked, though next moment he saw the mistake. His greatest mistake, however, was that he did not fling the knife away when he

found it was broken; but they do say that 'murder will out.' The mate at once fitted the point to the broken knife. Zola leaped up and tried to snatch another knife from one o' the men, but they was too quick for him. He was seized, and his hands tied, and they were leadin' him along the deck to put him in the hold when he burst from them and jumped overboard. They hove-to at once, an' out with the boat, but never saw Zola again; he must have gone down like a stone."

"That was a terrible end," said Joe, "and him all unprepared to die."

"True, Joe, but are *we* all prepared to die?" rejoined Evan, looking around, earnestly. "It is said that there's a day comin' when the sea shall give up *all* its dead, and the secrets of men, whatever they are, shall be revealed."

From this point Evan, whose earnest spirit was always hungering after the souls of men, led the conversation to religious subjects, and got his audience into a serious, attentive state of mind.

We have said that David Bright had remained that night on deck, but he did not on that account lose all that went on in the little cabin. He heard indeed the light conversation and chaff of the earlier part of the night, but paid no heed to it. When, however, Evan began the foregoing anecdote, his attention was aroused, and as the speaker sat close

to the foot of the companion every word he uttered was audible on deck.

At the time, our fallen skipper was giving way to despair He had been so thoroughly determined to give up drink; had been so confident of the power of his really strong will, and had begun the struggle so well and also continued for a time so successfully, that this fall had quite overwhelmed him. It was such a thorough fall, too, accompanied by such violence to his poor boy and to one of his best men, that he had no heart for another effort. And once again the demon tempter came to him, as he stood alone there, and helpless on the deserted deck. A faint gleam of light, shooting up the companion, illuminated his pale but stern features which had an unusual expression on them, but no eye was there to look upon those features, save the all-searching Eye of God.

"It was soon over with *him!*" he muttered, as he listened to Evan telling of Zola's leap into the sea. "An' a good riddance to myself as well as to the world it would be if I followed his example. I could drop quietly over, an' they 'd never find it out till—but—"

"Come, don't hesitate," whispered the demon. "I thought you were a man once, but now you seem to be a coward after all!"

It was at this critical point that Evan, the

mate of the *Sparrow*, all ignorant of the eager listener overhead, began to urge repentance on his unbelieving comrades, and pointed to the Crucified One—showing that no sinner was beyond hope, that Peter had denied his Master with oaths and curses, and that even the thief on the cross had life enough left for a saving look.

"We have nothing to *do*, lads, only to *submit*," he said, earnestly.

"Nothing to do!" thought David Bright, in surprise, not unmingled with contempt, as he thought of the terrible fight he had gone through before his fall.

"Nothing to do!" exclaimed John Gunter in the cabin, echoing, as it were, the skipper's thought, with much of his surprise and much more of his contempt. "Why, mate, I thought that you religious folk felt bound to pray, an' sing, an' preach, an' work!"

"No, lad—no—not for *salvation*," returned Evan; "we have only to *accept* salvation—to cease from refusing it and scorning it. After we have got it, from and in Jesus, we will pray, and sing, and work, ay, an' preach too, if we can, for the love of the Master who 'loved us and gave Himself for us.'"

Light began to break in on the dark mind of David Bright as he listened to these words, and

earnestly did he ponder them, long after the speaker and the rest of the crew had turned in.

Daylight began to flow softly over the sea, like a mellow influence from the better land, when the net was hauled.

Soon the light intensified and showed the rest of the fleet floating around in all directions, and busily engaged in the same work—two of the nearest vessels being the mission smack and that of Singing Peter. Ere long the fish were cleaned, packed, put on board the steamer and off to market. By that time a dead calm prevailed, compelling the fishermen to "take things easy."

"Billy," said David Bright, "fetch me that bit of wood and a hatchet."

Billy obeyed.

"Now then, let's see how well you'll cut that down to the size o' this trunk—to fit on where that bit has bin tore off."

The skipper was seated on a pile of boxes; he flung his left hand with a careless swing on the fish-box on which Billy was about to cut the piece of wood, and pointed to the trunk which needed repair. Billy raised the axe and brought it down with the precision and vigour peculiar to him. Instead of slicing off a lump of wood, however, the hatchet struck a hard knot, glanced off, and came

down on his father's open palm, into which it cut deeply.

"Oh! father," exclaimed the poor boy, dropping the axe and standing as if petrified with horror as the blood spouted from the gaping wound, flowed over the fish-box, and bespattered the deck.

He could say no more.

"Shove out the boat, boys," said the skipper promptly, as he shut up the wounded hand and bound it tightly in that position with his pocket-handkerchief to stop the bleeding.

Joe Davidson, who had seen the accident, and at once understood what was wanted, sprang to the boat at the same moment with Luke and Spivin. A good heave at the tackle; a hearty shove with strong shoulders, and the stern was over the rail. Another shove and it was in the sea.

"Lucky we are so close to her," said Joe, as he jumped into the boat, followed by Luke and Gunter.

"Lucky indeed," responded Luke.

Somehow David Bright managed to roll or jump or scramble into his boat as smartly with one hand as with two. It is a rare school out there on the North Sea for the practice of free-hand gymnastics!

"Bear away for the mission smack, Joe."

No need to give Joe that order. Ere the words had well passed the skipper's lips he and Luke Trevor

were bending their powerful backs, and, with little Billy at the steering oar, the boat of the *Evening Star* went bounding over the waves towards the fisherman's floating refuge for wounded bodies and souls.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DAY OF CALM FOLLOWED BY A NIGHT OF STORM.

A FINE-TONED manly voice was heard, as the boat approached the mission smack, singing one of the popular hymns which are now pretty well known throughout the fishing fleets.

"No mistaking that voice," said David Bright, turning an amused look on Billy; "Singin' Peter won't knock off till he 's under the sod or under the sea."

"Then he 'll never knock off at all," returned Billy, "for Luke there has bin tellin' me that we only begin to sing rightly a song of praise that will never end when we git into the next world."

"That depends, lad, on whether we goes up or down."

"Well, I s'pose it does. But tell me, daddy, ain't the hand very bad? I 'm so awful sorry, you know."

"It might ha' bin worse, Billy, but don't you take on so, my boy. We 'll be all right an' ship-shape when we gets it spliced or fixed up somehow, on board the mission ship."

The hand was not, however, so easily fixed up as David Bright seemed to expect.

"Come down an' let 's have a look at it, David," said the skipper, when the vessel's deck was gained.

By that time Singing Peter had stopped his tune, or, rather, he had changed it into a note of earnest sympathy, for he was a very tender-hearted man, and on terms of warm friendship with the master of the *Evening Star*.

"It 's a bad cut," said Peter, when the gaping gash in the poor man's palm was laid bare, and the blood began to flow afresh. "We 'll have to try a little o' the surgeon's business here. You can take a stitch in human flesh I daresay, skipper? If you can't, I 'll try."

The mission skipper was, however, equal to the occasion. He spunged the wound clean; put a couple of stitches in it with sailor-like neatness—whether with surgeon-like exactness we cannot tell—drew the edges of the wound still more closely together by means of strips of sticking plaster; applied lint and bandages, and, finally, did up our skipper's fist in a manner that seemed quite artistic to the observant men around him.

"A regular boxin'-glove," exclaimed David, hitting the operator a gentle tap on the nose with it.

"Thank 'ee, friend," said the amateur surgeon, as he proceeded to re-stow his materials in the medicine

chest; "you know that the Fishermen's Mission never asks a rap for its services, but neither does it expect to receive a rap without asking. Come, David, you mustn't flourish it about like that. We all know you're a plucky fellow, but it'll never splice properly if you go on so."

"Hold on, Mr. Missionary!" cried Gunter, as the lid of the chest was being closed, "don't shut up yet, I wants some o' your doctor's stuff."

"All right, my hearty! What do *you* want?"

"He wants a pair o' eye-glasses," cried Billy, whose heart was comforted, and whose spirits were raised by the success of the operation on his father's hand; "you see he's so short-sighted that he can't see no good in nobody but his-self."

"Shut up, you young cat-fish! See here," said Gunter, stretching out his wrists, which were red and much swollen.

"Oh! I can give you something for that;" so saying the skipper supplied the fisherman with a little ointment, and then, going to a cupboard, produced a pair of worsted cuffs. "You rub 'em well with that first," he said, "an' then wear the cuffs."

"He'll want more cuffs than that," said Billy.

"I think not, my boy," said the skipper, with a benignant look, as he stooped to lock the chest. "When these are worn out he can have more."

"Well, if you'd take my advice," returned Billy,

"you'd give him another pair. A cuff on each side of his head would do him a world of good."

Gunter turned sharply to make a grasp at his young tormentor, but the lad had taken care to have the cabin table between them, and at once sprang laughing up the companion.

"He's a smart boy, that," remarked the mission skipper.

"Rather too smart," growled Gunter, as he pocketed his salve and cuffs, and went on deck.

"Smart enough!" remarked David Bright with a low chuckle of satisfaction.

"Come now," said the Missionary, "you'll stop and have some coffee or cocoa with us. You can't work wi' that hand, you know. Besides, there'll be no fishin' till this calm's over. So we mean to have a little meetin' in the afternoon. We're in luck too, just now," he added in a lower voice, "for we've got a real parson a-board. That's him talkin' to my mate. He's here on a visit—partly for his health, I believe—a regular clergyman of the Church of England and a splendid preacher, let me tell you. You'll stop, now, won't you?"

David Bright's countenance grew sad. The memory of his recent failure and fall came over him.

"What's the use o' *me* attendin' your meetin's?" he said, almost angrily; "my soul's past recovery, for I don't believe in your prayin' an' psalm-singin'."

"You trusted me freely wi' your hand, David, though I 'm no surgeon. Why won't you trust me a little wi' your soul, though I 'm no parson—especially as it seems to be in a very bad way by your own account? Have a talk wi' the parson. He 's got such a way with him that he 's sure to do you good."

It was not so much the words thus spoken as the grave, kind, sensible tones and looks which accompanied them, that won the despairing fisherman.

"Well, I 'll stop," he said, with a short laugh; "the cocoa may do me good, even though the meetin' don't."

"Now you 're becoming soft and unmanly—a regular old wife," whispered the demon, who had watched him anxiously throughout the whole morning.

"The boat 's alongside, father," Billy called out, at that moment, down the open skylight.

"That 's right," replied the father in a strong hearty voice. "You go aboard wi' the rest, my boy, an' come back in the arternoon when you see 'em hoist the mission flag. I 'm goin' to stop aboard, an' we 'll all attend the meetin' together. An' look you, Billy, fetch my Noo Testament with 'ee—the one your mother gave me."

"Praise the Lord for these words!" said the mission skipper.

He did not say it very loud, for he was not by nature a demonstrative man; neither did he whisper it, for he was not ashamed to thank his God for mercies received.

At the same moment the demon fled away for that time—according to the true word, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

David Bright did not talk much that afternoon. His injured hand gave him considerable pain, but it was not that which silenced him. Thoughts too deep for utterance were passing through his brain. It was the turning-point of his life; and, while his mind was busy with the great issues that must be faced sooner or later by all mankind, he listened with mingled surprise, hope, fear, and pleasure, to the free and hearty converse of the godly crew of the gospel-ship, as they discoursed pleasantly, now of the homes in Yarmouth or Gorleston, now of the home above; or sang, with stentorian voices, some of the lively hymns that are happily current in the present day, or prayed in the ungrammatical language, and with the intense fervour, of untutored but thoroughly earnest men.

They thought that David was suffering from his injury, and wisely let him alone, though they occasionally gave him a cheering word, and frequently plied him with hot cocoa, which he preferred much, he said, to coffee.

This may seem to some a rather incongruous way of presenting religious and secular things. It may be so, but we are not careful to preserve congruity, or to dilute our dish to please the palate of the fastidious. This world is full of incongruities, and we are endeavouring to present that portion of it now under consideration as it actually is at the present time.

The heartiest, the most genial, and perhaps the noisiest fisherman there that day was the man whom we have referred to more than once as Singing Peter. It seemed as if he were intoxicated with joy, and could not refrain from bursting into song in praise of Redeeming Love. But Peter was by no means exclusive in his ideas. He could descend to the simple matters of this life when needful. Like David Bright he was a temporary visitor to the mission ship, and waited for the afternoon meeting. Peter possessed

> "A heart at leisure from itself,
> To soothe and sympathise,"

and found time to have a private talk with David, whom he drew out so tenderly, yet powerfully, that he wormed from him the whole story of his spiritual as well as spirituous warfare. He even got him down into the cabin alone, and, when there, proposed that they should pray together. To this David at once agreed, and the good man prayed with such

simple fervour that David found himself ere long weeping like a child. That the prayer of Singing Peter was in harmony with his spirit was evident from the deep "Amen!" which he uttered at its conclusion.

"Many a time, Peter," he said, grasping his friend's hand, as they rose from their knees, "many a time has my face bin washed wi' salt water from the sea, but it's not often bin dabbled wi' salt water from my eyes!"

In the afternoon the weather became unusually sultry, and as the calm continued, many of the fishing smacks closed by imperceptible degrees around the mission ship, whose flag flying at the mizen told that the worship of God was soon to begin. Several of the other smacks also flew Bethel-flags. These belonged to the whole-hearted ones who had fairly and boldly come out on the Lord's side. Others drew near, although they did not fly the flag. Some of these belonged to the half-hearted, who wanted medicines or books, and were rather indifferent about the meeting, though willing enough, perhaps, to remain to it.

One way or another there was soon a long tail of boats floating astern of the gospel-ship, and a goodly congregation on her deck. Her skipper was very busy. Books were being actively exchanged. One or two men wanted to sign the pledge. Salves,

and plasters, and pills, were slightly in demand, for even North Sea fishermen, tough though they be, are subject to physical disturbance.

At last the hour arrived, and the heavy-booted, rough-jacketed, sou'-westered, burly congregation adjourned to the hold, where, appropriately seated on fish-trunks, they opened their hymn-books and began to sing.

They had a harmonium—provided, of course, by the Mission—and it chanced that the mission skipper had music enough in him to play a simple accompaniment on it, but the strong-lunged congregation drowned it out in the first five minutes.

Then the invalid clergyman stood up and prayed, and read a chapter of God's Word, after which he preached—ay, preached in a way that drew tears from some, and hearty exclamations of thankfulness from others. It was not the power of rhetoric or of eloquence, though he possessed both, so much as that mighty power which consists in being thoroughly and intensely earnest in what one says, and in using a natural, conversational tone.

There were more signings of the temperance pledge after the service, and one or two whose minds had been wavering before, now came forward and offered to purchase Bethel-flags. Others wanted to purchase Testaments, prayer-books, and gospel compasses—the latter being the invention of an

ingenious Christian. It consisted of a mariner's compass drawn on card-board, with appropriate texts of God's Word printed on the various "points." The same ingenious gentleman has more recently constructed a spiritual chart, so to speak, on which are presented to the eye the various shoals, and quicksands, and rocks of sin, and danger, and temptation, that beset the Christian pilgrim, as well as the streams, rivers, and channels, that conduct him from the regions of Darkness into the realms of Light.

All this took up so much time that it was getting dark when our fishermen began to go over the side, and proceed to their several vessels.

Soon after that the aspect of nature entirely changed. The sultry calm gave place to a fast increasing breeze, which raised white crests on the darkening waves.

"A dirty night we're going to have of it," remarked David Bright to Singing Peter, as he got into his tossing boat with some difficulty.

"It's all in the Master's hands," replied Peter, looking up with a glad expression on his weather-worn face. With these words he left the mission smack and returned to his own vessel.

The fishermen of the North Sea had cause to remember that night, for one of the worst gales of the season burst upon them. Fishing was impossible. It was all that they could do to weather

the gale. Sails were split and torn, rigging was damaged, and spars were sprung or carried away. The wind howled as if millions of wicked spirits were yelling in the blast. The sea rose in wild commotion, tossing the little smacks as if they had been corks, and causing the straining timbers to groan and creak. Many a deck was washed that night from stem to stern, and when grey morning broke cold and dreary over the foaming sea, not a few flags, half-mast high, told that some souls had gone to their account. Disaster had also befallen many of the smacks. While some were greatly damaged, a few were lost entirely with all their crews.

Singing Peter's vessel was among the lost. The brightening day revealed the fact that the well-known craft had disappeared. It had sunk with all hands, and the genial fisherman's strong and tuneful voice had ceased for ever to reverberate over the North Sea in order that it might for ever raise a louder and still more tuneful strain of deep-toned happiness among the harmonies of heaven.

CHAPTER XIX.

RUTH FINDS THAT EVERYTHING SEEMS TO GO AGAINST HER.

ANXIOUSLY did Ruth Dotropy await the return of Captain Bream to Yarmouth, and patiently did she refrain, in the meantime, from questioning Mrs. Bright as to her history before marriage, for that good woman's objection to be so questioned was quite sufficient to check her sensitive spirit. But poor Ruth's enthusiastic hopes were doomed to disappointment at that time, for, only a few days after the captain's departure, she received a letter from him, part of which ran as follows :—

"DEAR MISS RUTH,—I am exceedingly sorry and almost ashamed, to be obliged to say that I am unable to return to Yarmouth for some weeks at least. The fact is that I have for a long time been engaged in a piece of business—a sort of search—which has caused me much anxiety and frequent disappointment. My lawyer, however, now thinks he has hit on the right clue, so that I have good hope of being successful. In the meantime will you do your best to comfort the Miss Seawards

in my absence, and explain to them that nothing but necessity could make me leave them in the lurch in this fashion," etc.

"How *very* provoking!" exclaimed Ruth, with a pretty little frown on her innocent face after reading the letter to her stately mother.

"Why provoking, dear?" asked Mrs. Dotropy. "Surely we can enjoy the fine air of Yarmouth without Captain Bream, and although the dear Miss Seawards are very fond of him, they will not pine or lose their health because of his absence for a short time. Besides, have they not that wonderful theological library to divert them?"

"Yes, mother—it's not that, but I was *so* anxious to find out—"

She stopped short.

"Find out what, child?"

"Well now, mother, I can *not* keep it from you any longer. I will tell you my little secret if you promise not to reveal it to any living soul."

"How absurd you are, Ruth! Do you suppose that I shall go about the streets proclaiming your secret, whatever it is, to Tom, Dick, and Harry, even if it were worth telling, much less when it is probably not worth remembering? Of course I might let it slip, you know, by accident, and when a thing slips there is no possibility of recovery, as I said once to your dear father that time when he slipped off the

end of the pier into the water and had to be fished up by the waist-band of his trousers with grappling-irons, I think they called them—at all events they were very dangerous-looking things, and I 've often argued with him—though I hate argument—that they might have gone into his body and killed him, yet he would insist that, being blunt, the thing was out of the question, though, as I carefully explained to him, the question had nothing to do with it—but it is useless arguing with you, Ruth—I mean, it was useless arguing with your father, dear man, for although he was as good as gold, he had a very confused mind, you know. What was it we were talking about?—oh yes!—your secret. Well, what is it?"

With a flushed face and eager look, Ruth said, "Mother, I *cannot* help being convinced that Mrs. Bright, the fisherman's wife, is no other than Captain Bream's lost sister!"

"If you cannot help being convinced, child, it is of no use my attempting to reason with you. But why think of such nonsense? If she is what you suppose, she must have been a Miss Bream before marriage."

"So she was!" exclaimed Ruth, with a look of triumph. I have found that out—only I fear that is not proof positive, because, you know, although not a common name, Bream is by no means singular.

"Well, but she would have been a lady- or—or would have had different manners if she had been Captain Bream's sister," objected Mrs. Dotropy.

"That does not follow," said Ruth, quickly. "The captain may have risen from the ranks; we cannot tell; besides, Mrs. Bright *is* very refined, both in manner and speech, compared with those around her. I was on the point one day of asking if she had a brother, when she seemed to draw up and cut the matter short; so I have had to fall back on my original plan of trying to bring the two face to face, which would at once settle the question, for of course they 'd know each other."

"Dear child, why make such a mystery about it?" said Mrs. Dotropy; "why not tell the captain of your suspicion, and ask him to go and see the woman?"

"Because it would be so cruel to raise his expectations, mother, and then perhaps find that I was wrong. It would disappoint him so terribly. But this reference to a 'search' in his letter makes me feel almost sure he is searching for this lost sister."

"Foolish child! It is a wild fancy of your romantic brain. Who ever heard," said the mother, "of a lawyer being employed to search for a sister? Depend upon it this captain is in search of some deed,—a lost will, or a—an old parchment, or a document of some sort, perhaps referring to a mis-

managed property, or estate, or fortune, for things of that kind are often seen in the newspapers; though how the newspapers come to find out about them all is more than I can understand. I've often wondered at it. Ah! your dear father used to say in his facetious way that he was "lost in the *Times*," when he wanted to be let alone. I don't mean advertised for as lost, of course, though he might have been, for I have seen him lose his head frequently; indeed I have been almost forced to the conclusion more than once that the *Times* had a good deal to do with your father's mental confusion; it told such awful lies sometimes, and then a month or two afterwards would flatly contradict them all by telling the truth—at least it was probably the truth since it was the opposite of the lies; but it's of no use talking, I always find that. What were you saying, child?"

"Well, mother, I was going to say," answered Ruth, with a sigh, "that I must just have patience and be content to wait."

"Now you talk like the dear, good, sensible little thing that you are," said Mrs. Dotropy, rising; "run, put on your hat, and I'll walk with you by the sea, or go visit the fisher-folk if you like—or the Miss Seawards."

In this amiable frame of mind the mother and daughter set off to the shore.

Ruth's patience was indeed tried more severely than she had anticipated, for, whatever the search was in which Captain Bream had engaged, it compelled him to remain in town much longer than he had intended.

Meanwhile the *Evening Star* returned to port, and David Bright, with Billy, Joe, and the rest of the crew, went to enjoy themselves in their various ways during their brief holiday.

Mrs. Bright chanced to be spending the afternoon with Mrs. Joe Davidson and her wonderful "babby" when the skipper and mate walked in upon them. There were two little shrieks of joy; then the two wives were enfolded, and for a few seconds lost to view, in the stupendous embrace of the two fishermen, while the babby was, for the moment, absolutely forgotten! But she took care not to be forgotten long. On recovering from her first surprise she gave utterance to a howl worthy of a seaman's daughter. Joe immediately seized her in his arms, and half smothered her in a fond embrace, to which, apparently, she did not object.

Meanwhile little Billy stood looking on approvingly, with his hands in his pockets and his booted legs wide apart.

"I wonder when somebody's agoin' to pay some sort of attention to *me*," he said after a minute or two.

"Why, Billy, I didn't see ye," cried Mrs. Joe, holding out her hand; "how are ye, puss in boots?"

"If it was any other female but yourself, Maggie, as said that, I'd scorn to notice you," returned Billy, half indignant.

"My darling boy!" cried Mrs. Bright, turning to her son and enfolding him in her arms.

"Ah! that's the way to do it," responded Billy, submitting to the embrace. "You're the old ooman as knows how to give a feller a good hearty squeeze. But don't come it too strong, mother, else you'll put me all out o' shape. See, daddy's agoin' to show his-self off."

This last remark had reference to a small bundle which David Bright was hastily untying.

"See here, Nell," he said, with a strange mixture of eagerness and modesty, "I've joined 'em at last, old girl. Look at that."

He unrolled a "M. D. S. F. flag"* which he had purchased from the skipper of the mission smack.

"An' I've signed the pledge too, lass."

"Oh! David," she exclaimed, grasping her hus-

---

*

band's right hand in both of hers. But her heart was too full for more.

"Yes, Nell, I've had grace given me to hoist the Lord's colours in the Short Blue, an' it was your little book as done it. I'd ha' bin lost by now, if it hadn't bin for the blessed Word of God."

Again Nell essayed to speak, but the words refused to come. She laid her head on her husband's shoulder and wept for joy.

We have said that David Bright was not by nature given to the melting mood, but his eyes grew dim and his voice faltered at this point, and it is not improbable that there would have been a regular break-down, if Joe's blessed babby had not suddenly come to the rescue in the nick of time with one of her unexpected howls. As temporary neglect was the cause of her complaint it was of course easily cured. When quiet had been restored Mrs. Bright turned to her son—"Now, Billy, my boy, I must send you off immediately."

"But what if I won't go off—like a bad sky-rocket?" said the boy with a doubtful expression on his face.

"But you'll have to go—and you'll be willing enough, too, when I tell you that it's to see Miss Ruth Dotropy you are going."

"What!—the angel?"

"Yes, she's here just now, and wants to see you very much, and made me promise to send you to her

the moment you came home. So, off you go! She lives with her mother in the old place, you know."

"All right, *I* know. Farewell, mother."

In a few minutes Billy was out of sight and hearing—which last implies a considerable distance, for Billy's whistle was peculiarly loud and shrill. He fortunately had not to undergo the operation of being "cleaned" for this visit, having already subjected himself to that process just before getting into port. The only portions of costume which he might have changed with propriety on reaching shore were his long boots, but he was so fond of these that he meant to stick to them, he said, through thick and thin, and had cleaned them up for the occasion.

At the moment he turned into the street where his friends and admirers dwelt, Ruth chanced to be at the window, while the Miss Seawards, then on a visit to her mother, were seated in the room.

"Oh! the *darling!*" exclaimed Ruth, with something almost like a little shriek of delight.

"Which darling—you 've got so many?" asked her mother.

"Oh! Billy Bright, the sweet, innocent—look at him; quick!"

Thus adjured the sisters ran laughing to the window, but the stately mother sat still.

"D' you mean the boy with the boots on?" asked Jessie, who was short-sighted.

"Yes, yes, that 's him!"

"If you had said the boots with the boy in them, Jessie," observed Kate, "you would have been nearer the mark."

In a few minutes, Billy, fully alive to his importance in the ladies' eyes, sat gravely in the midst of them answering rapid questions.

"You 've not had tea, Billy, I hope," said Ruth, rising and ringing the bell.

"No, miss, I haven't, an' if I had, I 'm always game for two teas."

Soon Billy was engaged with bread, butter, cakes, and jam, besides other luxuries, some of which he had never even dreamed of before.

"What an excellent appetite you have!" said Jessie Seaward, scarcely able to restrain her admiration.

"Yes, ma'am," said Billy, accepting another bun with much satisfaction, "we usually does pretty well in the Short Blue in that way, though we don't have sich grub as this to tickle our gums with. You see, we has a lot o' fresh air out on the North Sea, an' it' s pretty strong air too—specially when it blows 'ard. W'y, I 've seed it blow that 'ard that it was fit to tear the masts out of us; an' once it throw'd us right over on our beam-ends."

"On what ends, boy?" asked Mrs. Dotropy, who was beginning to feel interested in the self-sufficient little fisherman.

"Our *beam*-ends, ma'am. The beams as lie across under the deck, so that w'en we gits upon *their* ends, you know, we 're pretty well flat on the water."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Jessie; "but when that happens how can you walk the deck?"

"We can't walk the deck, ma'am. We has to scramble along the best way we can, holdin' on by hands and teeth and eyelids. Thank 'ee, miss, but I really do think I 'd better not try to eat any more. I feels chockfull already, an' it might be dangerous. There 's severe laws now against overloadin', you know."

"No such laws in this house, Billy," said Ruth, with a laugh. "But now, if you have quite done I should like to put a few questions to you."

"Fire away, then, Miss," said the boy, looking exceedingly grave and wise.

"Well, Billy," began Ruth, with an eager look, "I want to know something about your dear mother."

She hesitated at this point, as if uncertain how to begin, and the boy sought to encourage her with—

"Wery good, Miss, I knows all about *her*. What d'ee want to ax me?"

"I want to ask," said Ruth, slowly, "if you know what your mother's name was before she was married?"

Ruth did not, as the reader knows, require to ask this question, but she put it as a sort of feeler to ascertain how far Billy might be inclined to assist her.

"Well, now, that *is* a stumper!" exclaimed the boy, smiting his little thigh. "I didn't know as she had a name afore she was married. Leastwise I never thought of it or heerd on it, not havin' bin acquainted with her at that time."

With a short laugh Ruth said, "Well, never mind; but perhaps you can tell me, Billy, if your mother ever had a brother connected with the sea—a sailor, I mean."

"Stumped again!" exclaimed the boy; "who'd have thought I was so ignorant about my own mother? If she ever had sich a brother, he must have bin drownded, for I never heerd tell of 'im."

"Then you never heard either your father or mother mention any other name than Bright—I mean in connection with yourselves?" said Ruth in a disappointed tone.

"Never, Miss, as I can reck'lect on. I would willin'ly say yes, to please you, but I'd raither not tell no lies."

"That's right, my good boy," said Mrs. Dotropy, with a stately but approving nod, "for you know where all liars go to."

"Yes, ma'am, an' I knows where liars *don't* go to," returned Billy, looking up with pious resignation, whereat the Miss Seawards and Ruth burst into a laugh.

It must not be supposed that Billy meant to be

profane, but he had taken a dislike to Mrs. Dotropy, and did not choose to be patronised by her.

As poor Ruth found that it was useless to pursue her investigations in this direction further, she changed the subject to the North Sea fishery, with the details of which her little friend was of course quite conversant. Then she proposed to accompany Billy home.

"I want to make the acquaintance of your father," she said.

"Ah! he's a true blue *now* he is," said Billy.

"Was your father not always a true blue?" asked Ruth, as they went along the street together.

"Well, it ain't right for me to say ought agin my father—but—he's true blue *now*, anyhow."

And Ruth found that the reformed drunkard was indeed "true blue," and very glad to see her; nevertheless she obtained no information from him on the subject she was so anxious about—not because he was uncommunicative, but because Ruth, being very timid, had not courage to open her lips upon it.

The shades of evening were beginning to descend when she rose to leave. Both father and son offered to escort her home, but she declined the offer with many thanks, and went off alone.

CHAPTER XX.

DETAILS TWO ROBBERIES AND AN AWFUL SITUATION.

THE attainment of Felicity is said to be the aim of all mankind. In order to this end, men in all ages have voluntarily submitted themselves to prolonged *in*felicity. They have toiled in daily pain and sorrow throughout a long life to attain at last, if possible, to the coveted condition. Some have pursued it in eager intensity, dancing and singing as they went. Others have rushed after it in mad determination, cursing and grumbling as they ran. Many have sought it in rapt contemplation of the Sublime and Beautiful. Thousands have grubbed and grovelled for it in the gratification or the drowning of the senses, while not a few have sought and found it in simple, loving submission to their Maker's will, as made known by Conscience and Revelation.

Of all the varied methods, John Gunter, the fisherman, preferred the grub-and-grovelling method, and the favourite scene of his grovelling was a low grog-shop in one of the lower parts of Yarmouth.

It must be said, at this point, that Gunter was not considered by his mates as a regular out-and-out fisherman. He had never served his apprenticeship, but, being a powerful and sufficiently active seaman, was tolerated among them.

It is said that adversity makes strange bed-fellows. It is not less true that strong drink makes strange companions. Gunter's shipmates having had more than enough of him on the sea were only too glad to get clear of him when on land. He therefore found himself obliged to look out for new companionships, for it is certain that man yearns after sympathy of some sort, and is not, under ordinary circumstances, content to be alone.

The new friends he sought were not difficult to find. In one of the darkest corners of the public-house referred to he found them—an accidental group—consisting of an ex-clerk, an ex-parson, and a burglar, not "ex" as yet! They had met for the first time, yet, though widely separated as regards their training in life, they had found the sympathetic level of drink in that dingy corner. Of course, it need hardly be said that the first two had swung far out of their proper orbits before coming into harmonious contact with the last. Of course, also, no one of the three desired that his antecedents should be known. There was not much chance, indeed, that the former occupations of the clerk or the parson

would be guessed at, for every scrap of respectability had long ago been washed out of them by drink, and their greasy coats, battered hats, dirty and ragged linen, were, if possible, lower in the scale of disreputability than the rough garments of the burglar.

The subject of their conversation was suitable to all ages and countries—to all kinds and conditions of men. It was politics!—a fine, healthy, flexible subject, so utterly incomprehensible to fuddled brains that it could be distended, contracted, inflated, elongated, and twisted to suit any circumstances or states of mind. And such grand scope too, for difference, or agreement, of opinion.

Oh! it was pitiful to see the idiotic expressions of these fallen men as they sat bound together by a mutual thirst which each abhorred, yet loved, and which none could shake off. And there was something outrageously absurd too—yes, it is of no use attempting to shirk the fact—something intolerably funny in some of the gestures and tones with which they discussed the affairs of the nation.

"Hail fellow well met" was the generous tendency of Gunter's soul when ashore. Accosting the three in gruff off-hand tones with some such sentiment, he sat down beside them.

"Same to you, pal," said the burglar, with a sinister glance at the new-comer from under his heavy brows.

"How do? ol' salt!" exclaimed the clerk, who was by far the most tipsy of the three. "Come 'ere. We 'll make you r'free—umpire—to shettle zish d'shpute. Queshn is, whether it's the dooty of the poor to help the rish—no, zhat 's not it. W—w'ether it 's dooty of rish to help the poor—zhat 's it—by sharin' all they have with 'em or—"

"That 's not the question at all," cried Gunter, gruffly—"the question is, what 'll you have to drink!

"Bravo!" exclaimed the parson, "that *is* the question!"

"You 're a trump!" said the burglar.

"Well," exclaimed the clerk, with a tremendous assumption of winking-dignity, "ishn't zhat zactly what I was goin' to shay, if you 'd on'y listen. 'What 'll you 'ave to drink!' jus' so. Now, if you want to argue it out properly, you 'll—"

He was checked and almost floored by a tremendous though facetious slap on the back from Gunter, who said that they wouldn't argue it out; that they would drink it out first, and argue it out afterwards.

In pursuance of this plan he called the landlord, and, ordering spirits and water, treated the assembled company all round—including a few bloated and wretched women, some of whom carried children in their arms.

Whatever of the ludicrous might have struck an observer of the scene, while listening to the above conversation, it would have been all put to flight by the sight of these poor women, and perchance by the thought that they had been brought up to that life; had never known better, and would never have a chance of knowing better unless some exceptional rays of heavenly light should penetrate the dark region in which they lived. Praise be to God! such rays do visit such haunts at times, and brands are often plucked from the fire, but with these we have nothing to do at present. Our object just now is to trace the course of John Gunter.

You may be sure that one who spent his money so freely, and at the same time drank heavily, was not likely to escape the special attention of his new friend, the burglar. That worthy, besides being an expert in the heavier branches of his art, was not unacquainted with its lighter work. He watched the fisherman narrowly, observed in which pocket he kept his money, waited until he was sufficiently drunk for his purpose, and then picked his pockets at an engrossing moment when the clerk was unfolding a perfect scheme of national reform to the parson, who, with eyes shut, and supposed to be listening intently, was in reality fast asleep.

His object accomplished, the burglar said he would go out and have a look at the weather, which

he did, and having quietly hidden his spoils he returned to report the weather "all right," and to make quite sure that he had left nothing whatever in any of Gunter's pockets. Having satisfied himself on this point he was about to retire to take a final look at the weather when Gunter said—

"Hold on, mate; 'ave another glass."

He felt in his pocket for the wherewith to pay for the drink, and missed his money. He was by no means as drunk as he appeared to be, and at once suspected his comrade.

"You've stole my blunt!" he shouted, without a moment's hesitation.

"You're a liar!" returned the burglar, promptly.

Gunter was fierce by nature. He made no rejoinder, but struck a blow at the other which would have felled him had it taken effect. The burglar, however, was a pugilist. He evaded the blow, and returned it with such force that the fisherman staggered, but recovered himself, and grappled with his adversary.

In a moment all was uproar and confusion; benches were upset, spitoons kicked about, and pipes smashed, as the two powerful men swayed about, and tried fiercely to strangle each other. The women rushed screaming from the place; the landlord and his assistants interfered, but it was not until the police were called in that the combatants

were separated. Then there occurred a violent scene of explanation, allegation, recrimination, and retort, during which the guardians of the peace attempted to throw oil on the troubled waters, for it is always their aim, we believe, to quiet down drunken uproars when possible rather than to take up the rioters.

As the burglar, with an injured-innocent look, denied the charge made against him, and turned all his pockets inside out in proof of his veracity, Gunter was fain to content himself with the supposition that he had lost his money in some incomprehensible manner.

In a very sulky mood he flung out of the public-house and sauntered away. He knew not where to go, for he had no friends in Yarmouth—at least none who would have welcomed him—and he had not wherewith to pay for a bed even in the poorest lodging.

As he walked along, conscience began to smite him, but he was in no mood to listen to conscience. He silenced it, and at the same time called himself, with an oath, a big fool. There is no question that he was right, yet he would have denied the fact, and fought any one else who should have ventured so to address him.

The evening was beginning to grow dark as he turned down one of the narrow and lonely rows.

Now, it so happened that this was one of the rows through which Ruth Dotropy had to pass on her way home.

Ruth was not naturally timid, but when she suddenly beheld a half-drunken man coming towards her, and observed that no one else was near, something like a flutter of anxiety agitated her breast. At the same moment something like a sledge-hammer blow smote the concave side of John Gunter's bosom.

"She's got more than she needs," he growled between his teeth, "an' I've got nothin'!"

As his conscience had been silenced this was a sufficient argument for John.

"I'll thank you for a shillin', Miss," he said, confronting the now frightened girl after a hasty glance round.

"Oh! yes, yes—willingly," gasped poor Ruth, fumbling in her pocket for her purse. The purse, however, chanced to have been left at home. "Oh, *how* provoking! I have not my purse with me, but if these few pence will—"

"Never mind the pence, Miss," said Gunter—accepting the pence, however, as he spoke—"that nice little watch will do jist as well."

He snatched the watch which hung at Ruth's waist-belt, snapped the slender guard that held it, and made off.

When sufficiently out of danger of pursuit, he paused under a lamp to examine his prize. To his intense disgust he found that the little watch, instead of being a gold one, as he had expected, was only a silver one, of comparatively little value.

"Well, your first haul in this line ain't worth much," he grumbled. "Hows'ever, I 've got coppers enough for a night's lodgin' an' grub."

Saying which he pocketed the watch, and went on his way.

Meanwhile Ruth, having given vent to a sob of relief when the man left her, ran towards home as fast as she could, never pausing till she reached the Miss Seawards' door, which chanced to be a little nearer than her own. Against this she plunged with wonderful violence for one so gentle and tender, and then hammered it with her knuckles in a way that would have done credit to a light-weight prize-fighter.

The door was opened hastily by Liffie Lee, who, being a much lighter weight than her assailant, went down before her rush.

"Lawk! Miss Ruth," she exclaimed, on recovering her feet, "w'at 's a-'appened?"

But she asked the question of the empty air, for Ruth was already half sobbing, half laughing on the sofa, with a highly agitated sister on either side trying to calm her.

"Oh! what a little donkey I am," she exclaimed, flinging off her bonnet and attempting to laugh.

"What *has* happened?" gasped Jessie.

"*Do* tell us, dear," cried Kate.

"I—I—'ve been robbed, by a—dreadful man—so awfully gruff, a sailor I think, and—oh! (Ruth became suddenly much calmer) it did not occur to me till this moment—it is *the* watch—papa's little silver watch that Captain Bream brought him as a sort of curiosity from abroad long ago. Oh! I *am* so sorry! It was such a favourite with dear papa, and he told me to take such care of it when he gave it to me, for there was a romantic little history connected with it."

"What was it, dear?" asked Jessie, glad to find that the sudden diversion of her thoughts to the lost watch had done more to calm Ruth than all their demonstrative comfort.

Ruth at once proceeded to relate the story of the watch, but we will not inflict it on the reader, as it has no particular bearing on our tale. It had something to do, however, with detaining Ruth far later than she had intended to remain, so that she jumped up hastily at last, saying she must really go home.

"Are you sure the robber was a sailor?" asked Kate; "sailors are such dear nice men that I can hardly believe it."

"I'm almost quite sure," returned Ruth; "at all events he was dressed like one—and, oh! he *was* so gruff!"

From this point Ruth diverged into further and more minute details of the robbery, over which the three gloated with a species of fascination which is more frequently associated with ghost stories than true tales. Indeed we may say that *four* gloated over it, for Liffie Lee, unable to restrain her curiosity, put her head in at the door—at first with the more or less honest intention of asking if "hany think was wanted," and afterwards let her head remain from sheer inability to withdraw it.

At one point in the thrilling narrative she became intensely excited, and when Ruth tried in sepulchral tones to imitate John Gunter's gruff voice, she exclaimed, "Oh! lawks!" in such a gasp that the three ladies leaped up with three shrieks like three conscience-smitten kittens caught in a guilty act! Liffie was rebuked, but, from pity, or perhaps sympathy, was allowed to remain to hear the end.

When that point was reached, it was found to be so late that the streets were almost deserted, and the particular part in which their lodging stood was dreadfully silent.

"How am I ever to get home?" asked Ruth.

"It is not more than twenty doors off," said Kate, "and Liffie will go with you."

"Lawks, ma'am," said Liffie, "what could the likes o' me do if we was attacked? An' then—I should 'ave to return *alone!*"

"That is true," said the tender-hearted Jessie; "what *is* to be done? Our landlady goes to bed early. It would never do to rouse her—and then, she may perhaps be as great a coward as we are. Oh! if there was only a *man* in the house. Even a boy would do."

"Ah! I jist think 'e would," said Liffie. "If little Billy was 'ere, I wouldn't ax for no man!"

"I'll tell you what," said Kate with a bright look of decision, "we'll all go together. Get on your bonnet, Jessie."

There was no resisting Kate when once she had made up her mind. She put on her own bonnet, and her sister quickly returned ready, "with a heart," as Byron says, "for any fate."

"Now don't speak, any of you," whispered Kate. "If we are attacked, let us give a united shriek. That will raise some one to our aid."

"I should think it would, ma'am. It would a'most raise the dead," said Liffie, who also prepared herself for the ordeal.

Dark and deserted streets at late hours, with dangerous characters known to be abroad, have terrors to some small extent even for the averagely brave; what must they have, then, for those tender

ones of the weaker sex whose spirits are gentle, perhaps timid, and whose nerves have been highly strung by much converse on subjects relating to violence?

The first shock experienced by our quartette was caused by the door. From some inscrutable impulse Liffie Lee had locked it after Ruth had rushed in.

"Open it gently," whispered Jessie, for the party had now got to the condition of feeling very much as if they were themselves burglars, engaged in some unholy enterprise, and feared to arouse sleepers. But they need not have feared, for their landlady was one of the "seven sleepers' of Yarmouth.

Liffie exerted her little strength with caution, but the lock was stiff; it would not move. She screwed up her mouth, and put-to more strength; still it would not move. Screwing up her eyebrows as well as her mouth, she tried again. It would not budge. She even screwed up her nose in a stupendous effort, but all in vain. If there had been no need for caution, the thing would have been easy, but Jessie kept whispering, "Softly, Liffie, softly!" and Ruth echoed "Softly!" At last Liffie screwed herself up entirely, body and soul, in one supreme effort; she agonised with the key. It yielded, and the bolt flew back with a crack like a pistol-shot.

"Oh!" burst in four different keys—not door-keys—from the party—under their breath however.

"Open," whispered Jessie.

Liffie obeyed, and when the half-opened door revealed intense darkness outside, a feeling of horror caused their very flesh to creep.

"How I *wish* I hadn't stayed! I'll *never* do it again!" whispered poor Ruth in the tones of a child about to be punished.

"What's that!" exclaimed Jessie, with a start that caused Ruth almost to shriek.

"Cats!" said Liffie Lee.

"Impossible!" said Kate.

But it was not impossible, for there, in a corner not far off, were dimly seen two intensely black objects, with backs and tails arranged on the moorish-arch principle, and a species of low thunder issuing from them, suggestive of dynamite in the stomach.

Relieved to find it was nothing worse, the party emerged into the street. The cats were too much enraged and engaged with each other to observe them. They, like the ladies, were evidently cowards, for they continued to threaten without attacking.

Liffie was left on guard with strict injunctions to stand inside, hold tight to the door-handle, let in the returning sisters, and then slam the door in the face of all the world beside.

A run was now made for the Dotropy residence.

We could not call it a rush, for the three ladies were too light and elegant in form to proceed in such a manner. They tripped it—if we may say so—on light fantastic toe, though with something of unseemly haste. Ruth being young and active reached the door first, and, as before, went with a rebounding bang against it. The anxious Mrs. Dotropy had been for some time on the watch. She opened the door.

"Ruth!"

"Mamma!"

"Your daughter!" exclaimed the Miss Seawards in needless explanation, as they pushed her in, and then, turning round, fled homeward with so much noise that the attention of a night watchman was naturally attracted. The sisters heard his approaching foot-falls. They put on, in sporting language, a spurt. Just as the door was reached the two cats, becoming suddenly brave, filled the night-air with yells as of infants in agony. An irrepressible shriek burst from the sisters as they tripped over each other into the passage, and the faithful Liffie slammed the door in the face of the discomfited policeman.

It was a crucial test of friendship, and the Miss Seawards came to the conclusion that night, before retiring to rest, that nothing on earth would ever induce them to do it again.

CHAPTER XXI.

A HOPEFUL CLUE DISCOVERED.

WHEN Captain Bream, as before mentioned, was obliged to hurry off to London, and forsake the Miss Seawards, as well as his theological studies, he hastened to that portion of the city where merchants and brokers, and money-lenders, and men of the law do love to congregate.

Turning down Cheapside the captain sought for one of the many labyrinths of narrow streets and lanes that blush unseen in that busy part of the Great Hive.

"Only a penny, sir, *only* a penny."

The speaker was an ill-conditioned man, and the object offered for sale was a climbing monkey of easily deranged mechanism.

"Do you suppose," said the captain, who, being full of anxious thought, was for the moment irascible, "do you suppose that I am a baby?"

"Oh! dear no, sir. From appearances I should say you 've bin weaned some little time—*only* a

penny, sir. A nice little gift for the missus, sir, if you ain't got no child'n."

"Can you direct me," said the captain with a bland look—for his tempers were short-lived—"to Brockley Court?"

"First to the left, sir, second to the right, straight on an' ask again—*only* a penny, sir, climbs like all alive, sir."

Dropping a penny into the man's hand with a hope that it might help the monkeys to climb, Captain Bream turned into the labyrinth, and soon after found himself in a dark little room which was surrounded by piles of japanned tin boxes, and littered with bundles of documents, betokening the daily haunt of a man-of-law.

The lawyer himself—a bland man with a rugged head, a Roman nose and a sharp eye—sat on a hard-bottomed chair in front of a square desk. Why should business men, by the way, subject themselves to voluntary martyrdom by using polished seats of hard-wood? Is it with a view to doing penance for the sins of the class to which they belong?

"Have you found her, Mr. Saker?" asked Captain Bream, eagerly, on entering.

"No, not got quite so far as that yet—pray sit down; but we have reason to believe that we have got a clue—a slight one, indeed, but then, the information we have to go upon in our pro-

fession is frequently very slight—very slight indeed."

"True, too true," assented the captain. "I sometimes wonder how, with so little to work on at times, you ever begin to go about an investigation."

The lawyer smiled modestly in acknowledgment of the implied compliment.

"We do, indeed, proceed on our investigations occasionally with exceeding little information to go upon, but then, my dear sir, investigation may be said to be a branch of our profession for which we are in a manner specially trained. Let me see, now."

He took up a paper, and, opening it, began to read with a running commentary :—

"Fair hair, slightly grey; delicate features, complexion rather pale, brown eyes, gentle manners" ("that's her—that's her!" from the captain), "age apparently a little over thirty. You said, I think, that your sister was—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the captain in some excitement, "she was considerably younger than me, poor girl!"

"Let me, however, caution you, my dear sir, not to be too sanguine," said the man-of-law, looking over his spectacles at his client; "you have no idea how deceptive descriptions are. People are so prone to receive them according to their desires rather than according to fact."

'Well, but," returned the captain, with some asperity, "you tell me that this woman has fair hair slightly grey, delicate features, pale complexion, brown eyes, and gentle manners, all of which are *facts!*"

"True, my dear sir, but they are facts applicable to many women," replied the solicitor. "Still, I confess I have some hope that we have hit upon the right scent at last. If you could only have given us the name of her husband, our difficulty would have been comparatively slight. I suppose you have no means of hunting that up now. No distant relative or—"

"No, none whatever. All my relations are dead. She lived with an old aunt at the time, who died soon after the poor girl's foolish elopement, leaving no reference to the matter behind her. It is now fifteen years since then. I was away on a long voyage at the time. On my return, the old lady, as I have said, was dead, and her neighbours knew nothing except that my sister was reported to have run away with a seafaring man. Some who had seen him about the place said he seemed to be beneath her in station, but none knew his name."

"Is it not strange," asked the solicitor, "that she has never in all these years made inquiries about you at the mercantile house which employed you?"

"Well, not so strange as it would seem, for my

sister's memory for names was a bad one. She used constantly to forget the name of the ship I commanded, and, as far as I can remember, did not trouble herself about the owners. I have no doubt she must have made many efforts to discover me —unless she was ashamed of having made a low match. At all events," added the captain, with a weary sigh, "I have never ceased to make inquiries about her, although I have not until now made the attempt through a lawyer. But where is this person you have heard of to be found?"

"On board of an emigrant ship," said the solicitor.

"Where bound for?" demanded the captain in great surprise.

"For Australia, and she sails the day after to-morrow, I am told."

"Her name!" cried the captain, starting up.

"Calm yourself, my dear sir. I have made all needful arrangements for your going off to-morrow. It is too late to-day. Sit down and let me explain; and, above all, bear in mind that this may turn out to be a wrong scent after all. Of course you may surmise that we lawyers obtain our information from many and various sources. The source whence the information concerning your matter has come is peculiar, namely, a lay-missionary who is going to visit the ship to-morrow—having some friends on board. Happening to meet the man the other day,

I mentioned your matter to him. He is a very sharp-witted man, and one whose accuracy of observation I should trust implicitly, even if his own interests were involved. Well, he said that on board of the steam-ship *Talisman*, now lying off Gravesend, he saw that very day a woman among the steerage emigrants who answered to my description exactly, and added that he had heard her spoken of as the wife of a somewhat dissipated man, who had all the appearance of a seafaring person, named Richards. Of course I attach no importance to the name, as you say you never knew it, but his being a sailor-like man, and the fact that he was probably beneath his wife in station, coupled with the correct description of the wife, while it does not justify our being too sanguine, raises our hopes, you see—"

"I see, I see—yes. I beg that you will give me the agent's name and address," cried the captain, whose hopes, despite the guarded and cautious statements of the solicitor, had been raised to the highest point.

"Here is his name, with the part of the river where you are to meet him," said the calm man of law, handing his client a slip of paper; "but let me, my dear sir, impress on you the advisability of not allowing yourself to become too sanguine. Disappointments are invariably more severe in cases where expectations have been too high; and I fear

that you may be already building too trustfully upon the very slender foundation supplied by this information."

Admitting the force of this truism, and putting the slip of paper in his purse, Captain Bream bade his solicitor good-bye, with many protestations of undying gratitude, and left the room with the highest possible hopes of success.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE MISSION BOAT ON THE THAMES—THE DAMPING OF THE BODY CANNOT DAMP THE ARDENT SPIRIT.

NEXT morning Captain Bream accompanied the lay-missionary to Gravesend, where they took a boat and put off to the emigrant ship.

Great was the captain's satisfaction to find that his companion had been a sailor, and could talk to him—in nautical language too—about seafaring matters and distant climes.

"It is a good work in which you are engaged," he said; "are you going to preach to 'em?"

"No, only to distribute Testaments, tracts, and good books—though I may preach if I get the chance. My work lies chiefly among emigrants and boat and barge men, but I also do a good deal among regular sailors."

"Ah! That's the work that *I*'m fond of," said the captain, with enthusiasm. "Of course I don't mean to say that the soul of a sailor is of more value than that of any other man, but I lean to sailors naturally, havin' been among 'em the greater

part of my life. I've done a little myself in the way of preachin' to 'em."

"Have you?" exclaimed the missionary, with a pleased look.

And from this point the two men went off into a confidential and animated talk about their varied experiences on the sea of spiritual work on which they had both been launched, while the boatman—an old and evidently sympathetic man—pulled them to the vessel which lay at some distance from the place of embarkation.

While the two friends—for such they had become by that time—were chatting thus with each other, a little accident was in store for Captain Bream, which not only disarranged his plans, but afterwards considerably affected his career.

Having reached the age of sixty years, our captain was not quite as active in body as he had once been. He was, however, quite as active in heart and mind, besides having much of the fire of youth still burning in him. Hence he was apt at times to forget his body in the impulsive buoyancy of his spirit. An instance of this forgetfulness occurred that day. The missionary paid a passing visit to a vessel on their way to the emigrant ship. Having run alongside, Captain Bream put his foot on the first step of the ladder, with intent to mount the vessel's side.

"Have a care, sir," said the old boatman, who was assisting him with some anxiety.

It may be that the captain's too youthful spirit spurned assistance, or that he had miscalculated the powers of his too ancient body, for at the moment his foot slipped while as yet his hold of the man-ropes was not secure, and he fell with a lion-like roar that might have shamed the stoutest king of the African forests.

It was not a cry of fear, still less was it a shout for help. It seemed rather like an effervescing roar of indignant surprise.

The boatman held up his arms to catch the unfortunate man, but his strength availed nothing against such a weight. He was hurled into the bottom of the boat for his pains, and the captain went into the water feet first as deep as the waist. Here, however, the disaster was checked, for his strong arms caught the boat and held on.

The missionary, meanwhile, sprang forward and laid hold of him, while his man rose with wonderful agility and lent his aid.

"Heave—ahoy!" cried the missionary, grasping a waistband.

"Yo, heave, ho!" shouted the boatman, seizing a leg.

Another moment and the captain was safe in the bottom of the boat, which by that time was floating quietly down the Thames!

Great was the regret expressed by the missionary at this unfortunate event, and loud was the laughter with which it was treated by the captain himself, on being re-seated in the stern sheets.

"We must go ashore and get a change of dry clothes for you, sir."

"Not a bit of it," cried the captain. "Row back to the ship; I'll mount that ladder yet. If I didn't I'd keep dreaming of my discomfiture for a twelvemonth to come." They ran alongside the vessel a second time, and went up the side in safety.

But, arrived on deck, the skipper, who happened to be a hospitable man and friendly to the missionary, insisted on having Captain Bream down into his cabin.

"Now you'll put on a suit of my clothes," he said, "till your own are dry."

The captain would not hear of it.

"Just let me wring my own out," he said, "and I'll be all right."

"Have a glass of wine then, or brandy?"

"Impossible; thank'ee, I'm an abstainer."

"But you need it to prevent catching cold, you know. Take it as physic."

"Physic!" exclaimed the captain. "I never took physic in my life, and I won't begin wi' the nasty stuff now. Thank'ee all the same."

"Some coffee, then? I've got it all ready."

"Ay—that's better—if you're sure you've got it handy."

While the captain and the skipper were discussing the coffee, the wet garments were sent to the galley and partially dried. Meanwhile the missionary made the most of his opportunity among the men. By the time he had finished his visit, the captain's nether garments were partially dried, so they continued their voyage to the emigrant ship. When they reached her the poor captain's interest in other people's affairs had begun to fail, for his anxiety about his long-lost sister increased, as the probability of finding her at last became greater

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW CAPTAIN BREAM FARED IN HIS SEARCH, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE finding of an individual in a large emigrant ship may not inaptly be compared to the finding of a needle in a haystack. Foreseeing the difficulty, the missionary asked Captain Bream how he proposed to set about it.

"You say that you do not know the married name of your sister?" he said, as they drew near to the towering sides of the great vessel.

"No; I do not."

"And you have not seen her for many years?"

"Not for many years."

"Nevertheless, you are quite sure that you will recognise her when you do see her?"

"Ay, as sure as I am that I'd know my own face in a lookin'-glass, for she had points about her that I'm quite sure time could never alter."

"You are involved in a great difficulty, I fear," continued his friend, "for, in the first place, the time at your disposal is not long; you cannot ask

for the number of her berth, not having her name, and there is little probability of your being able to see every individual in a vessel like this while they keep moving about on deck and below."

The captain admitted that the difficulties were great, and his countenance grew longer, for, being as we have said a remarkably sympathetic man, the emotions of his heart were quickly telegraphed to his features.

"It strikes me," continued the missionary, in a comforting tone, "that your best chance of success will be to enter my service for the occasion, and go about with me distributing New Testaments and tracts. You will thus, as it were, have a reason for going actively about looking into people's faces, and even into their berths. Excuse me for asking —what do you think of doing if you find your sister, for the vessel starts in a few hours?"

"Oh, I 'll get her—and—and her husband to give up the voyage and return ashore with me. I 'm well enough off to make it worth their while."

The missionary did not appear to think the plan very hopeful, but as they ran alongside at the moment there was no time for reply.

It was indeed a bewildering scene to which they were introduced on reaching the deck. The confusion of parting friends; of pushing porters with trunks and boxes; perplexed individuals searching

for lost luggage; distracted creatures looking for lost relatives; calm yet energetic officers in merchant-service uniform moving about giving directions; active seamen pushing through the crowds in obedience to orders; children of all sizes playing and getting in people's way; infants of many kinds yelling hideously or uttering squalls of final despair. There was pathos and comicality too intermingled. Behold, on one side, an urchin sitting astonished—up to his armpits in a bandbox through which he has just crashed—and an irate parent trying to drag him out; while, on your other side, stands a grief-stricken mother trying to say farewell to a son whose hollow cheeks, glittering eyes, and short cough give little hope of a meeting again on this side the grave. Above all the din, as if to render things more maddening, the tug alongside keeps up intermittent shrieks of its steam-whistle, for the first bell has rung to warn those who are not passengers to prepare for quitting the steamer. Soon the second bell rings, and the bustle increases while in the excitement of partings the last farewells culminate.

"We don't need to mind that bell, having our boat alongside," said the missionary to Captain Bream, as they stood a little to one side silently contemplating the scene. "You see that smart young officer in uniform, close to the cabin sky-light?"

"Yes."

"That's the captain."

"Indeed. He seems to me very young to have charge of such a vessel."

"Not so young as he looks," returned the other. "I shall have to get his permission before attempting anything on board, so we must wait here for a few minutes. You see, he has gone into his cabin with the owners to have a few parting words. While we are standing you'll have one of the best opportunities of seeing the passengers, for most of them will come on deck to bid relatives and friends farewell, and wave handkerchiefs as the tug steams away, so keep your eyes open. Meanwhile, I will amuse you with a little chit-chat about emigrants. This vessel is one of the largest that runs to Australia."

"Indeed," responded the captain, with an absent look and tone that would probably have been the same if his friend had said that it ran to the moon. The missionary did not observe that his companion was hopelessly sunk in the sea of abstraction.

"Yes," he continued, "and, do you know, it is absolutely amazing what an amount of emigration goes on from this port continually, now-a-days. You would scarcely believe it unless brought as I am into close contact with it almost daily. Why, there were no fewer than 26,000 emigrants who

sailed from the Thames in the course of last year."

"How many hogsheads, did you say?" asked the captain, still deeply sunk in abstraction.

A laugh from his friend brought him to the surface, however, in some confusion.

"Excuse me," he said, with a deprecatory look; "the truth is, my mind is apt to wander a bit in such a scene, and my eyes chanced to light at the moment you spoke on that hogshead over there. How many emigrants, did you say?"

"No fewer than 26,000," repeated the missionary good-naturedly, and went on to relate some interesting incidents, but the captain was soon again lost in the contemplation of a poor young girl who had wept to such an extent at parting from a female friend, then in the tug, that her attempts to smile through the weeping had descended from the sublime to the ridiculous. She and her friend continued to wave their kerchiefs and smile and cry at each other notwithstanding, quite regardless of public opinion, until the tug left. Then the poor young thing hid her sodden face in her moist handkerchief and descended with a moan of woe to her berth. Despite the comical element in this incident, a tear was forced out of Captain Bream's eye, and we rather think that the missionary was similarly affected. But, to say truth, the public at large cared little

for such matters. Each was too much taken up with the pressing urgency of his or her own sorrows to give much heed to the woes of strangers.

"People in such frames of mind are easily touched by kind words and influences," said the missionary in a low voice.

"True, the ground is well prepared for you," returned the captain softly, for another group had absorbed his attention.

"And I distribute among them Testaments, gospels, and tracts, besides bags filled with books and magazines."

"Was there much powder in 'em?" asked the captain, struggling to the surface at the last word.

"I don't know about that," replied his friend with a laugh, "but I may venture to say that there was a good deal of fire in some of them."

"Fire!" exclaimed the captain in surprise.

Explanation was prevented by the commander of the vessel issuing at that moment from the cabin with the owners. Hearty shakings of hands and wishes for a good voyage followed. The officers stood at the gangway; the last of the weeping laggards was kindly but firmly led away; the tug steamed off, and the emigrant vessel was left to make her final preparations for an immediate start on her long voyage to the antipodes, with none but her own inhabitants on board, save a few who had private means of quitting.

"Now is our time," said the missionary, hastening towards the captain of the vessel.

For one moment the latter gave him a stern look, as if he suspected him of being a man forgotten by the tug, but a bland smile of good-will overspread his features when the former explained his wishes.

"Certainly, my good sir, go where you like, and do what you please."

Armed with this permission, he and Captain Bream went to work to distribute their gifts.

Most of the people received these gladly, some politely, a few with suspicion, as if they feared that payment was expected, and one or two refused them flatly. The distributers, meanwhile, had many an opportunity afforded, when asked questions, of dropping here and there "a word in season."

As this was the first time Captain Bream had ever been asked to act as an amateur distributer of Testaments and tracts, he waited a few minutes, with one of his arms well filled, to observe how his companion proceeded, and then himself went to work.

Of course, during all this time, he had not for an instant forgotten the main object of his journey. On the contrary, much of the absence of mind to which we have referred was caused by the intense manner in which he scanned the innumerable faces that passed to and fro before him. He now went round eagerly distributing his gifts, though not so

much impressed with the importance of the work as he would certainly have been had his mind been less pre-occupied. It was observed, however, that the captain offered his parcels and Testaments only to women, a circumstance which caused a wag from Erin to exclaim—

"Hallo! old gentleman, don't ye think the boys has got sowls as well as the faimales?"

This was of course taken in good part by the captain, who at once corrected the mistake. But after going twice round the deck, and drawing forth many humorous as well as caustic remarks as to his size and general appearance, he was forced to the conclusion that his sister was not there. The lower regions still remained, however.

Descending to these with some hope and a dozen Testaments, he found that the place was so littered with luggage, passengers, and children, that it was extremely difficult to move. To make the confusion worse, nearly the whole space between decks had been fitted up with extra berths—here for the married, there for the unmarried—so that very little room indeed was left for passage, and exceedingly little light entered.

But Captain Bream was not affected by such matters. He was accustomed to them, and his eyesight was good. He was bent on one object, which he pursued with quiet, unflagging perseverance—

namely, that of gazing earnestly into the face of every woman in the ship.

So eager was the poor man about it that he forgot to offer the last armful of Testaments which he had undertaken to distribute, and simply went from berth to berth staring at the females. He would undoubtedly have been considered mad if it had not been that the women were too much taken up with their own affairs to think much about any one with whom they had nothing to do.

One distracting, and also disheartening, part of the process was, that, owing to the general activity on board, he came again and again to the same faces in different parts of the vessel, but he so frequently missed seeing others that hope was kept alive by the constant turning up of new faces. Alas! none of them bore any resemblance to that for which he sought so earnestly!

At last he returned to the place where his friend was preaching. By that time, however, the crowd was so great that he could not enter. Turning aside, therefore, into an open berth, with a feeling of weariness and depression creeping over his mind and body, he was about to sit down on a box, when a female voice at the other end of the berth demanded to know what he wanted.

Hope was a powerful element in Captain Bream's nature. He rose quickly and stopped to gaze

attentively into a female face, but it was so dark where she sat on a low box that he could hardly see her, and took a step forward.

"Well, Mr. Imprence, I hope as you'll know me again," said the woman, whose face was fiery red, and whose nature was furious. "What *do* you want here?"

The captain sighed profoundly. *That* was obviously not his sister! Then a confused feeling of incapacity to give a good reason for being there came over him. Suddenly he recollected the Testaments.

"Have one?" he said eagerly, as he offered one of the little black books.

"Have what?"

"A Testament."

"No, I won't have a Testament, I'm a Catholic," said the woman as she looked sternly up.

Captain Bream was considering how he might best suggest that the Word of God was addressed to all mankind, when a thought seemed to strike the woman.

"Are you the cap'n?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied absently, and with some degree of truth.

"Then it's my opinion, cap'n, an' I tell it you to your face, that you ought to be ashamed of yourself to put honest men an' wimen in places like this

—neither light, nor hair, nor nothink in the way of hornament to—"

"Captain Bream! are you there, sir?" cried the voice of his friend the missionary at that moment down the companion-hatch.

"Ay, ay, I 'm here."

"I 've found her at last, sir."

The captain incontinently dropped the dozen Testaments into the woman's lap and went up the companion-ladder like a tree-squirrel.

"This way, sir. She 's sittin' abaft the funnel."

In a few seconds Captain Bream and his companion stood before a pretty-faced, fair-haired woman with soft gentle eyes, which suddenly opened with surprise as the two men hurried forward and came to a halt in front of her. The captain looked anxiously at his friend.

"Is this the—" he stopped.

"Yes, that 's her," said the missionary with a nod.

The captain turned slowly on his heel, and an irrepressible groan burst from him as he walked away.

There was no need for the disappointed missionary to ask if he had been mistaken. One look had sufficed for the captain.

Sadly they returned to the shore, and there the missionary, being near his house, invited Captain Bream to go home with him and have a cup of tea.

"It will revive you, my dear sir," he said, as the captain stood in silence at his side with his head bowed down. "The disappointment must indeed be great. Don't give up hope, however. But your clothes are wet still. No wonder you shiver, having gone about so long in damp garments. Come away."

Captain Bream yielded in silence. He not only went and had a cup of his hospitable friend's tea, but he afterwards accepted the offer of one of his beds, where he went into a high fever, from which he did not recover for many weary weeks.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WRECK OF THE "EVENING STAR."

ABOUT the time that Captain Bream was slowly recovering from the fever by which he had been stricken down, a disaster occurred out on the North Sea, in connection with the Short Blue, which told powerfully on some of the men of that fleet. This was nothing less than the wreck of the *Evening Star*.

The weather looked very unsettled the morning on which David Bright's turn came about to quit the fleet and sail for port. He had flown the usual flag to intimate his readiness to convey letters, etc., on shore, and had also, with a new feeling of pride, run up his Bethel Flag to show his true colours, as he said, and to intimate his willingness to join with Christian friends in a parting hymn and prayer.

Some had availed themselves of the opportunity, and, just before starting, the *Evening Star* ran close to the mission smack.

"Lower the boat, Billy," said the skipper to his son as they sat in the cabin

"Ay, ay, daddy."

There was a kindliness now in the tone of David Bright's voice when he spoke to Billy that drew out the heart of that urchin as it had never been drawn out before, save by his mother's soft voice, and which produced a corresponding sweetness in the tones of the boy—for "love begets love."

The mission skipper received his visitor with unwonted heartiness.

"I pray the Lord to give you a good time on shore, David," he said, as they went down to the cabin, where some of the other skippers were having a chat and a cup of coffee.

"He 'll do that," said David. "He did it last time. My dear missis could scarce believe her ears when I told her I was converted, or her eyes when she saw the Bethel-flag and the temperance pledge."

"Praise the Lord!" exclaimed two or three of those present, with deep sincerity, as David thus referred to his changed condition.

"I can't bide with 'ee, lads," said David, "for time's up, but before startin' I *would* like to have a little prayer with 'ee, an' a hymn to the Master's praise."

We need not say that they were all ready to comply. After concluding, they saw him into his boat, and bade him God-speed in many a homely but hearty phrase.

"Good-bye, skipper; fare ye well, Billy; the Lord be with 'ee, Joe."

John Gunter was not omitted in the salutations, and his surly spirit was a little, though not much, softened as he replied.

"Fare ye well, mates," shouted David, as he once more stood on his own deck, and let his vessel fall away. A toss of the hand followed the salutation. Little Billy echoed the sentiment and the toss, and in a few minutes the *Evening Star* was making her way out of the fleet and heading westward.

The night which followed was wild, and the wind variable. Next day the sun did not show itself at all till evening, and the wind blew dead against them. At sunset, red and lurid gleams in the west, and leaden darkness in the east, betokened at the best unsteady weather.

Little did these bold mariners, however, regard such signs—not that they were reckless, but years of experience had accustomed them to think lightly of danger—to face and overcome it with equanimity. In addition to his native coolness, David Bright had now the mighty *power* of humble trust in God to sustain him.

It still blew hard when they drew near to land, but the wind had changed its direction, blowing more on the shore, and increasing at last to a gale which lined the whole coast with breakers. Before

the *Evening Star* could find refuge in port, night had again descended. Unfortunately it was one of the darkest nights of the season, accompanied with such blinding sleet that it became a difficult matter to distinguish the guiding lights.

"A dirty night, Billy," said David Bright, who himself held the tiller.

"Ay, father, it 'll be all the pleasanter when we get home."

"True, lad; the same may be said of the heavenly home when the gales of life are over. D'ee see the light, boy?"

"No, father, not quite sure. Either it 's not very clear, or the sleet an' spray blinds me."

"'Let the lower lights be burning,'" murmured the skipper, as a tremendous wave, which seemed about to burst over them, rushed beneath the stern, raising it high in the air. "You see the meanin' o' that line o' the hymn now, Billy, though you didn't when your dear mother taught it you. Bless her heart, her patience and prayers ha' done it all."

For some minutes after this there was silence. The men of the *Evening Star* were holding on to shroud or belaying pin, finding shelter as best they could, and looking out anxiously for the "lower lights."

"There 'll be some hands missin', I doubt, in the Short Blue fleet to-morrow, father," remarked Billy, with a solemn look.

"Likely enough; God have mercy on 'em," returned Bright. "It wasn't a much stiffer gale than this, not many years gone by, when twenty-seven smacks foundered, and a hundred and eighty souls were called to stand before their Maker."

As David spoke a sullen roar of breaking water was heard on the port bow. They had been slightly misled, either by their uncertainty as to the position of the true lights, or by some false lights on shore. At all events, whatever the cause, they were at that moment driving towards one of the dangerous sand-banks in the neighbourhood of Yarmouth. The course of the smack was instantly changed, but it was too late. Almost before an order could be given she struck heavily, her mainmast went over the side, carrying part of the mizen along with it. At the same time a wave broke just astern, and rushed over the deck, though happily not with its full force.

Even in that moment of disaster the bold fishermen did not quail. With their utmost energy indeed, but without confusion, they sprang to the boat, which, although lifted, had not been washed away. Accustomed to launch it in all weathers, they got it into the water, and, almost mechanically, Ned Spivin and Gunter tumbled into it, while Joe Davidson held on to the painter. Billy Bright was about to follow, but looking back shouted, "Come

along, father!" David, however, paid no attention to him. He still stood firmly at the tiller guiding the wreck, which having been lifted off, or over the part of the sand on which she had struck, was again plunging madly onward.

A few moments and one of those overwhelming seas which even the inexperienced perceive to be irresistible, roared after the disabled vessel. As it reached her she struck again. The billow made a clean sweep over her. Everything was carried away. The boat was overturned, the stout painter snapt, and the crew left struggling in the water.

But what of the people on shore when this terrible scene was being enacted? They were not entirely ignorant of it. Through driving sleet and spray they had seen in the thick darkness something that looked like a vessel in distress. Soon the spectral object was seen to advance more distinctly out of the gloom. Well did the fishermen know what that meant, and, procuring ropes, they hastened to the rescue, while spray, foam, sand, and even small pebbles, were swept up by the wild hurricane and dashed in their faces.

Among the fishermen was a young man whose long ulster and cap told that he was a landsman, yet his strength, and his energy, were apparently equal to that of the men with whom he ran. He

carried a coil of thin rope in his left hand. With the right he partly shielded his eyes.

"They 'll be certain to strike here," cried one of the fishermen, whose voice was drowned in the gale, but whose action caused the others to halt.

He was right. The vessel was seen to strike quite close, for the water was comparatively deep.

"She 's gone," exclaimed the young man already referred to, as the vessel was seen to be overwhelmed.

He flung off his top-coat as he spoke, and, making one end of the small line fast round his waist, ran knee-deep into the water. Some of the fishermen acted in a somewhat similar fashion, for they knew well that struggling men would soon be on the shore.

They had not to wait long, for the crew of the *Evening Star* were young and strong, and struggled powerfully for their lives. In a few minutes the glaring eyes of Zulu appeared, and the young man of the ulster made a dash, caught him by the hair, and held on. It seemed as if the angry sea would drag both men back into its maw, but the men on the beach held on to the rope, and they were dragged safely to land.

A cheer on right and left told that others were being rescued. Then it became known who the wrecked ones were.

"It 's the *Evening Star!*" exclaimed one.

"Poor David!" said another.

Then the cry was raised, "Have 'ee got little Billy?"

"Ay, here he comes!" shouted a strange voice.

It was that of the youth of the ulster, who now stood waist-deep eagerly stretching out his hands towards an object with which the wild waves seemed to sport lovingly. It was indeed little Billy, his eyes closed, his face white, and his curly yellow hair tossing in the foam, but he made no effort to save himself; evidently the force of the sea and perhaps the cold had been too much for his slight frame to bear.

Twice did the young man make a grasp and miss him. To go deeper in would have perhaps insured his own destruction. The third time he succeeded in catching the boy's hair; the men on shore hauled them in, and soon little Billy lay on the beach surrounded by anxious fishermen.

"Come, mates," said one, in a deep voice, "let's carry him to his mother."

"Not so," said the young man who had rescued Billy, and who had only lain still for a moment where he had fallen to recover breath. "Let him lie. Undo his necktie, one of you."

While he spoke he was busy making a tight roll of his own coat, which he immediately placed under the shoulders of Billy, and proceeded at once to

attempt to restore breathing by one of the methods of resuscitating the drowned.

The fishermen assisted him, some hopefully, some doubtfully, a few with looks of disbelief in the process. The youth persevered, however, with unflagging patience, well knowing that half-drowned people have been restored after nearly an hour of labour.

"Who is he?" inquired one fisherman of another, referring to the stranger.

"Don't you know him, mate?" asked the other in surprise.

"No, I've just come ashore, you know."

"That's Mr. Dalton, the young banker, as takes such a lift o' the temp'rance coffee-taverns an' Blue-Ribbon movement."

"He's comin'-to, sir!" exclaimed a voice eagerly.

This had reference to little Billy, whose eyelids had been seen to quiver, and who presently heaved a sigh.

"Fetch my coat," said Dalton. "He will indeed be restored, thank God."

The big ulster was brought. Billy was carefully wrapped up in it, and one of the stoutest among his fisher friends lifted him in his arms and bore him off to his mother.

"Have all the others been rescued?" inquired Dalton, eagerly, when Billy had been carried away.

No one could answer the question. All knew that some of the *Evening Star's* crew had been saved, but they could not say how many

"They 've bin taken to the Sailor's Home, sir," said one man.

"Then run up like a good fellow and ask if *all* are safe," said Dalton. "Meanwhile I will remain here and search the beach lest there should be more to rescue."

Turning again to the foaming sea the young banker proceeded slowly along the shore some distance, when he observed the body of a man being rolled up on the sand and dragged back by each returning wave. Rushing forward he caught it, and, with the aid of the fishermen, carried it beyond the reach of the hungry waves. But these waves had already done their worst. Dalton applied the proper means for restoration, but without success, and again the fishermen began to look gravely at each other and shake their heads.

"Poor woman!" they murmured, but said no more. Their feelings were too deep for speech as they mourned for one who was by that time a widow, though she knew it not.

At that moment some of the men came running down from the town—one, a tall, strong figure, ahead of them. It was Joe Davidson. He had been more exhausted than some of the others on

being rescued, and had been led to the Sailor's Home in a scarcely conscious condition. When they began to reckon up the saved, and found that only one was missing, Joe's life seemed to return with a bound. Breaking from those who sought to restrain him he ran down to the beach.

He knelt beside the drowned fisherman with a wild expression in his eyes as he laid hold of something that partly covered the drowned man. It was his own Bethel flag which David Bright had twisted round his body! Joe sprang up and clasped his hands as if to restrain them from violent action.

"Oh, David!" he said, and stopped suddenly, while the wild look left his eyes and something like a smile crossed his features. "Can it be true that ye 've gone so soon to the Better Land?"

The words gathered in force as they were uttered, and it was with a great cry of grief that he shouted, "Oh, David, David! my brother!" and fell back heavily on the sand.

CHAPTER XXV.

BILLY AND HIS FATHER RETURN HOME.

WHO can describe the strange mingling of grateful joy with bitter anguish that almost burst the heart of David Bright's widow on that terrible night!

She was singing one of the "Songs of Zion," and busy with household cares, preparing for the expected return of her husband and her son, when they carried Billy in.

It might be supposed that she would be anxious on such a stormy night, but if the wives of North Sea fishermen were to give way to fears with every gale that blew, they would be filled with overwhelming anxiety nearly all the year round.

When the knock at the door came at last the song ceased, and when the stout fisherman entered with his burden, and a fair curl, escaping from the folds of the ulster, told what that burden was, the colour fled from the poor woman's cheeks, and a sinking of the heart under a great dread almost overcame her.

"He 's all right, missus," said the man, quickly.

"Thank God!" gasped Mrs. Bright. "Are—are the rest safe?"

"I b'lieve they are. Some of 'em are, I know."

Obliged to be content, for the moment, with the amount of relief conveyed by these words, she had Billy laid on a bed, and bustled about actively rubbing him dry, wrapping him in blankets, applying hot bottles and otherwise restoring him; for as yet the poor boy showed only slight symptoms of returning vitality.

While thus engaged the door burst open, and Maggie Davidson rushed in.

"Oh, Nell!" she exclaimed, "what has happened—is it true—Billy!—dead? No; thank God for that, but—but—the *Evening Star* must be wrecked! Are the rest safe? Is Joe—"

The excited young wife stopped and gasped with anxiety.

"The Lord has been merciful in sending me my Billy," returned Mrs. Bright, with forced calmness, "but I know nothing more."

Turning at once, Maggie rushed wildly from the house intending to make straight for the shore. But she had not gone far when a crowd of men appeared coming towards her. Foremost among these was her own husband!

With a sharp cry of joy she rushed forward and threw herself into his ready arms.

"Oh! praise the Lord," she said; but as she spoke the appearance of her husband's face alarmed her. Glancing hastily at the crowd behind, she cast a frightened look up at Joe's face.

"Who is it?" she asked in a whisper, as four men advanced with slow measured tread bearing between them the form of a man.

"David," he said, while an irrepressible sob convulsed him.

For one moment the comely face of Maggie wore an expression of horror; then she broke from Joe, ran quickly back, and, seizing Mrs. Bright in her arms, attempted in vain to speak.

"What—what 's wrong, Maggie?"

The poor sympathetic young wife could not utter a word. She could only throw her arms round her friend's neck, and burst into a passion of tears.

But there was no need for words. Mrs. Bright knew full well what the tears meant, and her heart stood still while a horror of darkness seemed to sink down upon her. At that moment she heard the tread of those who approached.

Another minute, and all that remained of David Bright was laid on his bed, and his poor wife fell with a low wail upon his inanimate form, while Billy sat up on his couch and gazed in speechless despair.

In that moment of terrible agony God did not

leave the widow utterly comfortless, for even in the first keen glance at her dead husband she had noted the Bethel Flag, which he had shown to her with such pride on his last holiday. Afterwards she found in his pocket the Testament which she had given to him that year, and thus was reminded that the parting was not to be—for ever!

We will not dwell on the painful scene. In the midst of it, Ruth Dotropy glided in like an angel of light, and, kneeling quietly by the widow's side, sobbed as if the loss had been her own. Poor Ruth! She did not know how to set about comforting one in such overwhelming grief. Perhaps it was as well that she did not "try," for certainly, in time, she succeeded.

How Ruth came to hear of the wreck and its consequences was not very apparent, but she had a peculiar faculty for discovering the locality of human grief, a sort of instinctive tendency to gravitate towards it, and, like her namesake of old, to cling to the sufferer.

Returning to her own lodging, she found her mother, and told her all that had happened.

"And now, mother," she said, "I must go at once to London, and tell Captain Bream of my suspicions about Mrs. Bright, and get him to come down here, so as to bring them face to face without further delay."

"My dear child, you will do nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Dotropy, with unwonted decision. "You know well enough that Captain Bream has had a long and severe illness, and could not stand anything in the nature of a shock in his present state."

"Yes, mother, but they say that joy never kills, and if—"

"Who says?" interrupted Mrs. Dotropy; "who are 'they' who say so many stupid things that every one seems bound to believe? Joy *does* kill, sometimes. Besides, what if you turned out to be wrong, and raised hopes that were only destined to be crushed? Don't you think that the joy of anticipation might—might be neutralised by the expectation,—I mean the sorrow of—of—but it's of no use arguing. I set my face firmly against anything of the sort."

"Well, perhaps you are right, mother," said Ruth, with a little sigh; "indeed, now I think of it, I feel sure you are; for it might turn out to be a mistake, as you say, which would be an awful blow to poor Captain Bream in his present weak state. So I must just wait patiently till he is better."

"Which he will very soon be, my love," said Mrs. Dotropy, "for he is sure to be splendidly nursed, now he has got back to his old quarters with these admirable Miss Seawards. But tell me more about

this sad wreck. You say that the fisherman named Joe Davidson is safe?"

"Yes, I know he is, for I have just seen him."

"I 'm glad of that, for I have a great regard for him, and am quite taken with his good little wife. Indeed I feel almost envious of them, they do harmonise and agree so well together—not, of course, that your excellent father and I did not agree—far from it. I don't think that in all the course of our happy wedded life he ever once contradicted me; but, somehow, he didn't seem quite to understand things—even when things were so plain that they might have been seen with a magnifying-glass—I mean a micro—that is—no matter. I fear you would not understand much better, Ruth, darling, for you are not unlike your poor father. But who told you about the wreck?"

"A policeman, mother. He said it was the *Evening Star*, and the moment I heard that I hurried straight to Mrs. Bright, getting the policeman to escort me there and back. He has quite as great an admiration of Joe as you have, mother, and gave me such an interesting account of the change for the better that has come over the fishermen generally since the Mission vessels carried the gospel among them. He said he could hardly believe his eyes when he saw some men whom he had

known to be dreadful characters changed into absolute lambs. And you know, mother, that the opinion of policemen is of much weight, for they are by no means a soft or sentimental race of men."

"True, Ruth," returned her mother with a laugh. "After the scene enacted in front of our windows the other day, when one of them had so much trouble, and suffered such awful pommelling from the drunken ruffian he took up, I am quite prepared to admit that policemen are neither soft nor sentimental."

"Now, mother, I cannot rest," said Ruth, rising, "I will go and try to quiet my feelings by writing an account of the whole affair to the Miss Seawards."

"But you have not told me, child, who is the young man who behaved so gallantly in rescuing little Billy and others?"

A deep blush overspread the girl's face as she looked down, and in a low voice said, "It was our old friend Mr. Dalton."

"Ruth!" exclaimed Mrs. Dotropy, sharply, with a keen gaze into her daughter's countenance, "you are in love with Mr. Dalton!"

"No, mother, I am not," replied Ruth, with a decision of tone, and a sudden flash of the mild sweet eyes, that revealed a little of the old spirit of

the De Tropys. "Surely I may be permitted to admire a brave man without the charge of being in love with him!"

"Quite true, quite true, my love," replied the mother, sinking back into her easy chair. "You had better go now, as you suggest, and calm yourself by writing to your friends."

Ruth hurried from the room; sought the seclusion of her own chamber; flung herself into a chair, and put the question to herself, "*Am* I in love with Mr. Dalton?"

It was a puzzling question; one that has been put full many a time in this world's history without receiving a very definite or satisfactory answer. In this particular case it seemed to be not less puzzling than usual, for Ruth repeated it aloud more than once, "*Am* I in love with Mr. Dalton?" without drawing from herself an audible reply.

She remained in the same attitude for a considerable time, with her sweet little head on one side, and her tiny hands clasped loosely on her lap—absorbed in meditation.

From this condition she at last roused herself to sit down before a table with pen, ink, and paper. Then she went to work on a graphic description of the wreck of the *Evening Star*—in which, of course, Mr. Dalton unavoidably played a very prominent part.

Human nature is strangely and swiftly adaptable. Ruth's heart fluttered with pleasure as she described the heroism of the young man, and next moment it throbbed with deepest sadness as she told of Mrs. Bright's woe, and the paper on which she wrote became blotted with her tears.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

We have it on the highest authority that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. This fallen world does not readily believe that, but then the world is notoriously slow to believe the truth, and also rather apt to believe what is false. It was long before even the learned world could be got to believe that the world itself moves round the sun. Indeed it is more than probable that more than half the world does not believe that yet. On the other hand, much of it very likely believes still that the world is flat. A savage of the prairie would almost certainly entertain that fallacy, while a savage of the mountains would perhaps laugh him to scorn, yet neither would admit that it was a globe.

So, mankind is very unwilling to accept the truth that it is better to give than to receive, though such is certainly the case if there be truth in holy writ.

John Gunter had been much impressed, and not a little softened, by the recent catastrophe of the

shipwreck and of his skipper's death, but he had not yet been subdued to the point of believing that it would be better to spend an hour with widow Bright than to spend it in the public-house, even though his shipmate Joe Davidson did his best to persuade him of that truth.

"Come," said Joe, as a last appeal, "come, John, what 'll our shipmates think of 'ee if you never go near the poor thing to offer her a word o' comfort?"

"*I* can't comfort nobody," replied Gunter with a surly heave of his shoulder.

"Yes, you can," said Joe, earnestly; "why, the very sight o' you bein' there, out o' respect to David, would do her poor heart good."

The idea of anybody deriving comfort from a sight of *him* so tickled Gunter that he only replied with a sarcastic laugh, nevertheless he followed his mate sulkily and, as it were, under protest.

On entering the humble dwelling they found Spivin, Trevor, and Zulu already there. Mrs. Bright arose with tearful eyes to welcome the new guests. Billy rose with her. He had scarcely left his mother's side for more than a few minutes since the dark night of the wreck, though several days had elapsed.

It was a great era in the life of the fisher boy —a new departure. It had brought him for the first

time in his young life into personal contact, as it were, with the dark side of life, and had made an indelible impression on his soul. It did not indeed abate the sprightly activity of his mind or body, but it sobered his spirit, and, in one day, made him more of a man than several years of ordinary life could have accomplished. The most visible result was a manly consideration of, and a womanly tenderness towards, his mother, which went a long way to calm Mrs. Bright's first outbreak of sorrow.

These rough fishermen—rough only in outward appearance—had their own method of comforting the widow. They did not attempt anything like direct consolation, however, but they sat beside her and chatted in quiet undertones—through which there ran an unmistakable sound of sympathy. Their talk was about incidents and events of a pleasant or cheering kind in their several experiences. And occasionally, though not often, they referred to the absent David when anything particularly favourable to him could be said.

"We 've got good news, Joe," said Billy, when the former was seated.

"Ay, Billy, I 'm glad o' that. What may the good news be?"

"Another '*Evening Star*' has been raised up to us by the Lord," said Mrs. Bright, "but oh! it will never shine like the first one to *me!*" The

poor woman could go no further, so Billy again took up the story.

"You know," he said, "that our kind friend Miss Ruth Dotropy has been greatly taken up about us since father went—went home, and it seems that she 's bin writin' to Lun'on about us, tellin' all about the wreck, an' about our mistake in goin' to sea, last trip, without bein' inspected, which lost us the insurance-money. An' there 's a rich friend o' hers as has sent her a thousand pound to buy mother another smack!"

"You *don't* say that 's true, Billy!" exclaimed Joe, with a look of surprise.

"That 's just what I do say, Joe. The smack is already bought, and is to be fitted out at once, an' mother has made *you* her skipper, Joe, an' the rest have all agreed to go—Zulu as cook—and Gunter too. Won't you, John?"

The boy, who was somewhat excited by the news he had to tell, frankly held out his hand to Gunter, and that worthy, grasping it with an unwonted display of frankness on his part, growled—

"I 'm with 'ee, lad."

"Yes, it 's all arranged," resumed Billy, "and we 'll not be long o' being ready for sea, so you won't be left to starve, mother—"

Up to this point the poor boy had held on with his wonted vivacity, but he stopped suddenly. The

corners of his mouth began to twitch, and, laying his head on his mother's bosom, he sobbed aloud.

It did the widow good to comfort him. The fishermen had an instinctive perception that their wisest course lay in taking no notice, and continuing their low-voiced intercourse.

"Well, now," said Joe, "I have read in story-books of folk bein' as lib'ral sometimes as to give a thousand pounds, but I never thought I 'd live to see 'em do it."

"Why, Joe, where have your eyes and ears bin?" said Luke Trevor. "Don't you know it was a lib'ral gentleman, if not two, or p'raps three, as lent the *Ensign*, our first gospel-ship, to the Mission?"

"That 's true, Luke; I forgot that when I spoke, an' there 's more gospel-smacks comin', I 'm told, presented in the same way by lib'ral folk."

"It 's my belief," said Luke, with emphasis, at the same time striking his right knee with his hand, "it s my belief that afore long we 'll have a gospel-ship for every fleet on the North Sea."

"Right you are, boy," said Joe, "an' the sooner the better. Moreover, I 've heard say that there 's a talk about sellin' baccy on board of the mission-ships *cheaper* than what they do aboard o' the copers. Did any of 'ee hear o' that?"

"I heard somethin' about it," answered Luke, "but it 's too good news to be true. If they do, it 'll drive the copers off the sea."

"Of course it will. That's just what they're a-goin' to do it for, I suppose."

Reader, the mode of dealing with the abominable "coper" traffic referred to by these men has at last happily been adopted, and the final blow has been dealt by the simple expedient of underselling the floating grog-shops in the article of tobacco. Very considerable trouble and expense have to be incurred by the mission, however, for the tobacco has to be fetched from a foreign port; but the result amply repays the cost, for the men naturally prefer paying only 1s. per pound on board the mission-ship, to paying 1s. 6d. on board the "coper." The smacksman's advantages in this respect may be better understood when we say that on shore he has to pay 4s. per pound for tobacco. But his greatest advantage of all—that for which the plan has been adopted—is his being kept away from the vessel where, while purchasing tobacco, he is tempted to buy poisonous spirits. Of course the anti-smoker is entitled to say "it were better that the smacksman should be saved from tobacco as well as drink!" But of two evils it is wise to choose the less. Tobacco at 1s. 6d. procured in the "coper," with its, to some, irresistible temptation to get drunk on vile spirits, is a greater evil than the procuring of the same weed at 1s. in a vessel all whose surroundings and internal arrangements are conducive to the benefit of soul and body.

"D'ye mind the old *Swan*, boys?" asked an elderly man—a former friend of David Bright, who had dropped in with his mite of genuine sympathy.

"What, the first gospel-ship as was sent afloat some thirty years ago? It would be hard to remember what existed before I was born!"

"Well, you've heard of her, anyhow. She was lent by the Admiralty for the work in the year 18—, not to go out like the *Ensign* to the North Sea fleets, but to cruise about an' wisit in the Thames. I was in the *Swan* myself for a few months when I was a young fellow, and we had grand times aboard of that wessel. It seemed to me like a sort o' home to the sailors that they'd make for arter their woyages was over. Once, I reklect, we had a evenin' service, an' as several ships had come in from furrin parts that mornin' we had the *Swan* chockfull o' noo hands; but, bless you, though they was noo to us they warn't noo to each other. They had many of 'em met aboard the *Swan* years before. Some of 'em hadn't met for seven and ten year, and sich a shakin' o' hands there was, an' recognisin' of each other!—I thought we'd never get the service begun. Many of 'em was Christian men, and felt like brothers, you see."

"Did many of the masters an' mates come to the services in those days?" asked Joe Davidson.

"Ay, a-many of 'em. W'y, I 've seed lots o' both masters an' mates wolunteerin' to indoose their men to come w'en some of 'em warn't willin'—takin' their own boats, too, to the neighborin' ships an' bringin' off the men as wanted to, w'en the *Swan's* bell was a-ringin' for service. I heard one man say he hadn't bin to a place o' worship for ten year, an' if he 'd know'd what the *Swan* was like he 'd ha' bin to her sooner.'

"I mind meetin' wery unexpected with a friend at that time," continued the old fisherman, who saw that his audience was interested in his talk, and that the mind of poor Mrs. Bright was being drawn from her great sorrow for a little. "I hadn't met 'im for eight or ten years.

"'Hallo! Abel,' says I, 'is that you?'

"'That 's me,' says he, ketchin' hold o' my grapnel, an' givin' it a shake that a'most unshipped the shoulder. 'Leastwise it 's all that 's left o' me.'

"'What d'ee mean?' says I.

"'I mean,' says he, 'that I 've just lost my wessel on the Gunfleet sands, but, thank God, I haven't lost my life, nor none o' my men, though it was a close shave.'

"'How did it happen, Abel?' says I.

"Says he, 'It happened pretty much in the usual way. A gale, wi' sleet that thick we could hardly see the end o' the jib-boom. The moment we struck

I know'd it was all over wi' the old wessel, but I didn't see my way to go under without a struggle, so we made a desp'rit attemp' to git out the boats, but a sea saved us the trouble, for it swept 'em all away before we got at 'em, as if they'd bin on'y chips o' wood. Then, as if to mock us, another sea pitched us higher on the sands, so as the decks wasn't washed by every wave quite so bad, but we knew that wouldn't last, for the tide was makin' fast, so I calls the crew together, an' says I, "Now, lads, I've often prayed with you an' for you. In a few minutes we'll have to take to the riggin', an' you know what the end o' that's likely to be. Before doin' so, I'll pray again, for nothin' is impossible to the Lord, an' it may be His will to spare us yet a while." Well, I prayed. Then we took to the riggin' to wait for death—or rescue. An' sure enough, after we had bin six hours there, an' was all but frozen, a fishin'-smack came past and took us off.'"

"Now, mates," said Joe Davidson, after they had chatted thus in subdued tones for some time, "it do seem to me that as most of us are of one mind here, and we are, so to speak, of one fisher-family, it might do Mrs. Bright good if we was to have a bit of the Word together, and a prayer or two."

As every one agreed to this either heartily or by

silence, a Bible was produced, and Joe,—being mate of the late *Evening Star*, and therefore a sort of natural head of the family—read the portion where God promises to be a Husband to the widow, and a Father to the fatherless.

Then they all knelt while he prayed in simple language for comfort and a blessing to the mourning household. He was followed with a very few but intensely earnest words by Luke. Even John Gunter put up an unpremeditated prayer in the words, "God help us!" uttered in a choking voice, and the old fisherman followed them all with a deep "Amen."

After that they shook hands tenderly with the widow and Billy, and went out silently from the house of mourning.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CAPTAIN'S APPETITE RESTORED, AND RUTH IN A NEW LIGHT.

CAPTAIN BREAM reclined one day on a sofa in the sitting-room of the house where he had first made the acquaintance of the Miss Seawards. Both ladies were seated by his side, the one working worsted cuffs and the other comforters, and both found the utmost difficulty in repressing tears when they looked at their kind nautical friend, for a great change had come over him since we last saw him.

We will not venture to state what was the illness that had laid the captain, as he himself expressed it, on his beam-ends, but, whatever it might have been, it had reduced him to a mere shadow. His once round cheeks were hollow; his eyes were so sunken that they appeared to have retired into the interior of his head, out of which, as out of two deep caverns, they gleamed solemnly. His voice, having been originally pitched so low that it could not well get lower, had become reduced to the sound of a big drum muffled; it had also a faint resemblance to a bassoon with a bad cold. His

beard and moustache, having been allowed to grow, bore a striking likeness to a worn-out clothes-brush, and his garments appeared to hang upon a living skeleton of large proportions.

It is right, however, to add that this was the worst that could be said of him. The spirit within was as cheery and loving and tender as ever it had been—indeed more so—and the only wonder was that it did not break a hole in the once tough but now thin shell of its prison-house, and soar upwards to its native regions in the sky!

"You must *not* work so hard at these cuffs, Miss Jessie," he said, with a pleasant though languid smile. "If you do I'll reduce my board."

"But that would only render it necessary that I should work harder," returned Jessie, without checking the pace of the needles.

"It is hard," resumed the captain, "that I should be disobeyed at every turn now that I'm on my beam-ends, with little more strength in me than a new-born kitten. But never mind, I'm beginnin' to feel stronger, and I'll pay you off, my dear, when I'm able to move about."

"Do you really feel a little stronger?" asked Kate, who, although more lively—even mischievous in a small way—than her sister, had been more deeply affected by the captain's long illness, and could not shake off the impression that he was going to die.

"Feel stronger!" exclaimed the wrecked giant. "Give me your hand. D'ee feel *that?*"

"That" which Kate was to feel was a squeeze as a test of strength.

"There. Doesn't it hurt you? I believe I could make you cry if I was to try."

And the captain did make her cry even without trying, for Kate was so deeply touched with the weakness of the trembling squeeze, coupled with the hearty kindness and little touches of fun in the prostrate man, that she could not keep it down. Rising hurriedly, therefore, she flung her unfinished comforter into Jessie's lap, left the room, and, retiring to her chamber, wept quietly there. Those tears were not now, however, as they had often been, tears of anxious sorrow, but of thankful joy.

Having accomplished this little matter, and relieved her feelings, she returned to the parlour.

"I've been just trying to persuade him, Kate," said Jessie, as the former entered, "that in a week or two a trip to Yarmouth will do him *so* much good, but he does not seem to think he will be equal to it."

"Come, now, Miss Jessie, that's not a fair way to put it. I have no doubt that I shall be able enough—thanks to the good Lord who has spared me—but what I think is that Yarmouth, pleasant though it be, is not exactly what I want just now."

"What, then, do you think would be better for you?" asked Kate.

"'The sea! The sea! The open sea! The blue, the fresh, the ever free!'" answered the captain, with a gleam in the sunken eyes such as had not been seen there for many days.

"Horrible thought!" said Jessie, with a pretended shudder.

"You know the proverb, 'What's one man's meat is another man's poison," returned the captain. "Ah! ladies, only those who have been cradled on the deep for three quarters of a lifetime, and who love the whistling winds, and the surging waves, and the bounding bark, know what it is to long, as I do, for another rest upon my mother's breast:—

> 'And a mother she was and is to me,
> For I was born—was born on the open sea.'"

"I had no idea you were so poetical," said Jessie, much surprised at the invalid's enthusiasm.

"Sickness has a tendency to make people poetical, I suppose," returned the captain.

"But how are you to manage it? You can scarcely walk yet. Then excuse me, you haven't got a ship, and I fear that not many owners would intrust one to you till you are stronger. So, what will you do?"

"Go as a passenger, my dear. See here; it's all arranged," said the captain, holding up a letter.

"I got this by the post this morning, and want to consult with you about it. Knowing my condition and desires, that excellent man the chaplain, who took me out in his steam-launch the day I got the first shot of this illness, had made known my case to the Director of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, and he has kindly agreed to let me go a trip to the North Sea in one of the mission ships, on the understanding that I shall do as much of a missionary's work as I am fit for when there."

"But you're not fit for work of any kind!" exclaimed Kate with a flush of indignation which was partly roused by the idea of her friend being taken away from her at a time when he required so much nursing, and partly by the impropriety of so sick a man being expected to work at all.

"True, my dear, but I shall be fit enough in a week or two. Why, I feel strength coming back like a torrent. Even now I'm so hungry that I could devour my—my—"

"Your dinner!" cried Kate, as, at that opportune moment, the door opened and Liffie Lee appeared with a tray in her hand.

There could be no doubt as to the captain's appetite. Not only did his eyes glare, in quite a wolfish manner, at the food while it was being set before him, but the enormous quantity he took of

that food became quite a source of alarm to the sisters, who watched and helped him.

"Now, captain," said Jessie, laying her hand at last on his thin arm, as it was stretched out to help himself to more, "you really must not. You know the doctor said that it would never do, at first, to—"

"My dear," interrupted the invalid, "hang the doctor!"

"Well, I have no objection to his being hanged, if you don't ask me to do it," returned Jessie, "but really—"

"Oh! let him alone," said Kate, who, being very healthy, shared the captain's unreasonable contempt for medical men, and was more than pleased at the ravenous tendencies of her old friend.

"Now for the sponge-cakes," said the captain, wiping his mouth and rubbing his hands on finishing the first course.

"You are to have none," said Kate, firmly.

The captain's face elongated into a look of woe.

"Because you are to have rice-pudding and thick cream instead!" continued Kate.

The captain's face shortened again into a beaming smile.

Liffie Lee appeared at the moment with the viands named.

"I never saw anything like it!" exclaimed Jessie with a short laugh, and a look of resignation.

"I enjoy it *so* much!" said Kate, pouring out the cream with liberal hand.

Liffie said nothing, but if the widest extension of her lips, and the exposing of her bright little teeth from ear to ear, meant anything, it meant that her sympathies were entirely with Kate.

The captain was helped to pudding in a soup plate, that being relatively a rather small dessert plate for him. He was about to plunge the dessert spoon into it, but stopped suddenly and gazed at it. Then he turned his awful gaze on the small servant, who almost shrank before it.

"Liffie, my dear."

"Y—yes, sir."

"Bring me a *table*-spoon, the biggest one you have."

"Yes, sir," she said,—and vanished.

Presently she returned with an enormous gravy spoon.

"Ha! ha!" shouted the captain, with much of his old fire; "that's better than I had hoped for! Hand it here, Liffie; it'll do."

He seized the weapon, and Liffie uttered an involuntary squeal of delight as she saw him sweep up nearly the whole of his first helping, and make one bite of it! He then attempted to smile at

Liffie's expression of joy, but did it awkwardly in the circumstances.

Just as he had finished his little repast, and was tranquilly stirring a breakfast cup of coffee, the door bell rang.

A minute later Liffie appeared with her mouth and eyes like three round O's.

"If you please, ma'am, here's Mister and Missis Dalton, as wants to know if they may come in."

"Mr. and Mrs. who?" exclaimed both sisters.

"Mister an' Missis Dalton," repeated Liffie.

"Show them in—at once, child. Some ridiculous mistake," said Jessie, glancing at Kate. "But, stay, Liffie;—you have no objection, captain?"

"None in the least."

Another moment and Ruth appeared blushing in the doorway, with a handsome young man looming in the background.

"Mr. and Mrs. Dalton!" said the two sisters with a dazed look as they sank into two chairs.

"Oh *no!* darling Jessie," cried Ruth, rushing forward and throwing her arms round her friend; "not—not quite that yet, but—but—engaged. And we determined that the *very first* call we made should be to you, darling."

"Well, now, this *is* capital! Quite a picture," growled the captain; "does more good to my digestion than—"

"Come," interrupted Jessie, taking Ruth by the hand. "Come to our room!"

Regardless of all propriety, the sisters hurried Ruth off to their bedroom to have it out with her there, leaving young Dalton to face the captain.

"I congratulate you, my lad," said the captain, frankly extending his hand. "Sit down."

Dalton as frankly shook the hand and thanked the captain, as he took a seat beside him.

"I'm deeply grieved, Captain Bream, to see you so much reduced, yet rejoiced to find that you are fairly convalescent."

"Humph! I wouldn't give much for the depth of either your grief or joy on my account, seein' that you've managed to get hooked on to an angel."

"Well, I confess," said the youth, with a laugh, "that the joy connected with that fact pretty much overwhelms all other feelings at present."

"The admission does you credit, boy, for she *is* an angel. I'm not usin' figures o' speech. She's a real darlin', A.1 at Lloyd's. True blue through and through. And let me tell you, young fellow, that I know her better than you do, for I saw her before you were bor—, no, that couldn't well be, but I knew her father before you were born, and herself ever since she saw the light."

"I'm delighted to have your good opinion of

her, though, of course, it cannot increase my estimation of her character. Nothing can do that!"

"Which means that *my* opinion goes for nothing. Well, the conceit of the rising generation is only equalled by—by that o' the one that went before it. But, now, isn't it strange that you are the very man I want to see?"

"It is indeed," replied Dalton with a slightly incredulous look.

"Yes, the very man. Look ye here. Have you got a note-book?"

"I have."

"Pull it out, then. I want you to draw out my will."

"Your will, Captain Bream!"

"My will," repeated the captain. "Last will an' testament."

"But I'm not lawyer enough to—"

"I know that, man! I only want you to sketch it out. Listen. I'm going in a week or two to the North Sea in a fishing smack. Well, there's no sayin' what may happen there. I'm not infallible—or invulnerable—or waterproof, though I *am* an old salt. Now, you are acquainted with all my money matters, so I want you to jot down who the cash is to be divided among if I should go to the bottom; then, take the sketch to my lawyer—you know where he lives—and tell him to draw it out all ship-shape, an' bring it to me to sign. Now, are you ready?"

"But, my dear sir, this may take a long time, and the ladies will probably return before we—"

"You don't bother your head about the ladies, my lad, but do as I tell 'ee. Miss Ruth has got hold of two pair of ears and two hearts that won't be satisfied in five minutes. Besides, my will won't be a long one. Are you ready?"

"Yes," said Dalton, spreading his note-book on his knee.

"Well," resumed the captain, "after makin' all the usual arrangements for all expenses—funeral, etc. (of which there 'll be none if I go to the bottom), an' some legacies of which I 'll tell the lawyer when I see him, I leave all that remains to Miss Jessie and Miss Kate Seaward, share an' share alike, to do with it as they please, an' to leave it after them to whomsoever they like. There!"

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that 's all," returned the captain, sadly. "I once had a dear sister, but every effort I have made to find her out has failed. Of course if I do come across her before it pleases the Lord to take me home, I 'll alter the will. In the meantime let it be drawn out so."

Soon after this important transaction was finished the ladies returned, much flushed and excited, and full of apologies for their rude behaviour to their male friends.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OUT WITH THE SHORT BLUE AGAIN.

PLEASANT and heart-stirring is the sensation of returning health to one who has sailed for many weeks in the "Doldrums" of Disease, weathered Point Danger, crossed the Line of Weakness, and begun to steer with favouring gales over the smooth sea of Convalescence.

So thought Captain Bream one lovely summer day, some time after the events just narrated, as he sat on the bridge of a swift steamer which cut like a fish through the glassy waves of the North Sea.

It was one of Hewett and Co.'s carriers, bound for the Short Blue fleet. Over three hundred miles was the total run; she had already made the greater part of it. The exact position of the ever-moving fleet was uncertain. Nevertheless, her experienced captain was almost certain—as if by a sort of instinct—to hit the spot where the smacks lay ready with their trunks of fish to feed the insatiable maw of Billingsgate.

Captain Bream's cheeks were not so hollow as they had been when we last saw him. Neither were

they so pale. His eyes, too, had come a considerable way out of the caves into which they had retreated, and the wolfish glare in the presence of food was exchanged for a look of calm serenity. His coat, instead of hanging on him like a shirt on a handspike, had begun to show indications of muscle covering the bones, and his vest no longer flapped against him like the topsail of a Dutchman in a dead calm. Altogether, there was a healthy look about the old man which gave the impression that he had been into dock, and had a thorough overhaul.

Enough of weakness remained, however, to induce a feeling of blessed restfulness in his entire being. The once strong and energetic man had been brought to the novel condition of being quite willing to leave the responsibility of the world on other shoulders, and to enjoy the hitherto unknown luxury of doing nothing at all. So thoroughly had he abandoned himself in this respect, that he did not even care to speak, but was satisfied to listen to others, or to gaze at the horizon in happy contemplation, or to pour on all around looks of calm benignity.

"How do you feel to-day, sir?" asked the mate of the steamer, as he came on the bridge. "My strongest feeling," said Captain Bream, "is one of thankfulness to God that I am so well."

"A good feelin' that doesn't always come as

strong as it ought to, or as one would wish; does it, sir?" said the mate.

"That 's true," answered the captain, "but when a man, after bein' so low that he seems to be bound for the next world, finds the tide risin' again, the feelin' is apt to come stronger, d'ee see? D' you expect to make the fleet to-day?"

"Yes, sir, we should make it in the evenin' if the admiral has stuck to his plans."

The captain became silent again, but after a few minutes, fearing that the mate might think him unsociable, he said—

"I suppose the admiral is always chosen as being one of the best men of the fleet?"

"That 's the idea, sir, and the one chosen usually *is* one of the best, though of course mistakes are sometimes made. The present admiral is a first-rate man—a thorough-going fisherman, well acquainted with all the shoals, and a Christian into the bargain."

"Ah, I suppose that is an advantage to the fleet in many respects," said the captain, brightening up, on finding the mate sympathetic on that point.

"It is for the advantage of the fleet in *all* respects, sir. I have known an ungodly admiral, on a Sunday, when they couldn't fish, an' the weather was just right for heavin'-to an' going aboard the mission smack for service—I 've known him keep the fleet

movin' the whole day, for nothin' at all but spite. Of course that didn't put any one in a good humour, an' you know, sir, men always work better when they're in good spirits."

"Ay, well do I know that," said the captain, "for I've had a good deal to do wi' men in my time, and I have always found that Christian sailors as a rule are worth more than unbelievers, just because they work with a will—as the Bible puts it, 'unto the Lord and not unto men.' You've heard of General Havelock, no doubt?"

"Oh yes, sir, you mean the Indian general who used to look after the souls of his men?"

"That's the man," returned the captain. "Well, I've been told that on one occasion when the commander-in-chief sent for some soldiers for special duty, and found that most of 'em were drunk, he turned an' said, 'Send me some of Havelock's saints: they can be depended on!' I'm not sure if I've got the story rightly, but, anyhow, that's what he said."

"Ay, sir, I sometimes think it wonderful," said the mate, "that unbelievers don't themselves see that the love of God in a man's heart makes him a better and safer servant in all respects—according to the Word, 'Godliness is profitable to the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.' There's the fleet at last, sir!"

While speaking, the mate had been scanning the horizon with his glass, which he immediately handed to the captain, who rose at once and saw the line of the Short Blue like little dots on the horizon. The dots soon grew larger; then they assumed the form of vessels, and in a short time the carrying-steamer was amongst them, making straight for the admiral, whose smack was distinguishable by his flag.

"What is the admiral's name?" asked the captain as they advanced.

"Davidson—Joe Davidson; one of the brightest young fellows I ever knew," answered the captain of the steamer, who came on the bridge at that moment, "and a true Christian. He is master of the *Evening Star*."

"Why, I thought that was the name of a smack that was wrecked some time ago near Yarmouth —at least so my friends there wrote me," said Captain Bream with sudden interest; and well might he feel interest in the new *Evening Star*, for it was himself who had given the thousand pounds to purchase her, at Ruth Dotropy's request, but he had not been told that her skipper, Joe Davidson, had been made admiral of the fleet.

"So it *was* the *Evening Star*, sir, that was wrecked, but some open-handed gentleman in London bought a new smack for widow Bright, and she called it by the same name, an' the young man

who had been mate with her husband she has made skipper till her son Billy is old enough to take charge of her. The strangest thing is, that all the old crew have stuck together, and the smack is now one of the best managed in the fleet. Joe wouldn't have been made admiral if that wasn't so."

To this, and a great deal more, the captain listened with great joy and thankfulness, without, however, giving a hint as to his own part in the matter. Originally he had given the thousand pounds to please Ruth, and he had been at that time glad to think that the gift was to benefit a deserving and unfortunate widow. It was not a little satisfactory, therefore, to hear that his gift had been so well bestowed; that it had even become the admiral's vessel, and that he was about to have the opportunity of boarding the new *Evening Star* and himself inspecting its crew.

"Tell me a little more about this *Evening Star*," he said to the captain of the steamer. "I have sometimes heard of her from a lady friend of mine, who takes a great interest in her owner, but I was so ill at the time she wrote that I couldn't pay much attention to anything."

Thus invited the captain proceeded to tell all he knew about David Bright and his wife, and Billy, and Luke Trevor, Spivin, Gunter, Zulu, the wreck, the launch of the new smack, etc.—much of which

was quite new to Captain Bream, and all of which was of course deeply interesting to him.

While these two were conversing the fleet gradually thickened around them, for a light breeze, which seemed to have sprung up for the very purpose, enabled them to close in. Some of the smacks were close at hand; others more distant. To those within hail, the captain and mate of the steamer gave the customary salute and toss of the fist in the air as they passed.

"There's the admiral," said the captain, "two points off the port bow."

"An' the gospel-ship close alongside," said the mate. "Don't you see the M. D. S. F. flag? Trust Joe for bein' near to her when he can manage it. Here they come, fast an' thick. There's the *Fern*, I'd know her a mile off, an' the *Martin*, an' *Rover; Coquette, Truant!* What cheer, boys!"

"Is that the *Cherub* or the *Andax* abeam of us?" asked the captain.

"It's neither. It's the *Guide*, or the *Boy Jim*, or the *Retriever*—not quite sure which."

"Now, Captain Bream, shall we put you on board the mission ship at once, or will you wait to see us boarded for empty trunks?"

"I'll wait," returned Captain Bream.

Soon the steamer hove-to, not far from the admiral's vessel. The smacks came crowding round

like bees round a hive, each one lowering a boat when near enough.

And once again was enacted a scene similar in many respects to that which we have described in a previous chapter, with this difference, that the scramble now was partly for the purpose of obtaining empty boxes. Another steamer had taken off most of their fish early that day, and the one just arrived meant to wait for the fish of the next morning.

It chanced that a good many of the rougher men of the fleet came on board that evening, so that Captain Bream, whose recent experiences had led him half to expect that all the North Sea fishermen were amiable lions, had his mind sadly but effectively disabused of that false idea. The steamer's deck soon swarmed with some four hundred of the roughest and most boisterous men he had ever seen, and the air was filled with coarse and profane language, while a tendency to fight was exhibited by several of them.

"They're a rough lot, sir," said the mate as he leant on the rail of the bridge, gazing down on the animated scene, "but they were a rougher lot before the gospel-ship came out to stay among them, and some of the brightest Christians now in the fleet were as bad as the worst you see down there."

"Ay, Jesus came to save the *lost*, and the worst,"

said the captain in a low tone—"praise to His name!"

As soon as the trunks had been received, the admiral bore away to windward, and the fleet began to follow and make preparation for the night's fishing; for the fish which were destined so soon to smoke on London tables were at that moment gambolling at the bottom of the sea!

"We must run down to the mission smack, and put you aboard at once, sir," said the mate, "for she follows the admiral—though she does not fish on Saturday nights, so that the hold may be clear of fish and ready for service on Sundays.

Captain Bream was ready.

"They know you are coming, I suppose?"

"Yes, they expect me."

In a few minutes the steamer was close to the mission ship, and soon after the powerful arms of its hospitable skipper and mate were extended to help the expected invalid out of the boat which had been sent for him.

"We 're makin' things all snug for the night," said the skipper, as he led his guest into the little cabin, "an' when we 're done we shall have tea; but if you 'd like it sooner—"

"No, no, skipper, I 'll wait. Though I 'm just come from the shore, you don't take me for an impatient landlubber, do you? Go, finish your work,

and I 'll rest a bit. I've been ill, you see, an' can't stand as much as I used to," he added apologetically.

When left alone, Captain Bream's mode of resting himself was to go down on his knees and thank God for having brought him to so congenial a resting-place on the world of waters, and to pray that he might be made use of to His glory while there.

How that prayer was answered we shall see

CHAPTER XXIX.

ANOTHER FIGHT AND—VICTORY!

It is interesting to observe the curious, and oftentimes unlikely, ways in which the guilt of man is brought to light, and the truth of that word demonstrated—"Be sure your sin shall find you out."

Although John Gunter's heart was softened at the time of his old skipper's death, it was by no means changed, so that, after a brief space, it became harder than ever, and the man who had been melted—to some extent washed—returned, ere long, with increased devotion to his wallowing in the mire. This made him so disagreeable to his old comrades, that they became anxious to get rid of him, but Joe Davidson, whose disposition was very hopeful, hesitated; and the widow, having a kindly feeling towards the man because he had sailed with her husband, did not wish him to be dismissed. Thus it came to pass that when Captain Bream joined the Short Blue fleet he was still a member of the crew of the new *Evening Star*.

The day following that on which the captain arrived was Sunday, and, as usual, the smacks whose skippers had become followers of the Lord Jesus began to draw towards the mission ship with their Bethel-flags flying. Among them was the new admiral—Joe of the *Evening Star*. His vessel was pointed out, of course, to the captain as she approached. We need scarcely say that he looked at her with unusual interest, and was glad when her boat was lowered to row part of her crew to the service about to beheld in the hold of the gospel-ship.

It was natural that Captain Bream should be much taken with the simple cheery manners of the admiral, as he stepped aboard and shook hands all round. It was equally natural that he should take some interest, also, in John Gunter, for was it not obvious that that worthy was a fine specimen of the gruff, half-savage, raw material which he had gone out there to work upon?

"Why did you not bring Billy, Joe?" asked the skipper of the mission vessel.

"Well, you know, we had to leave some one to look after the smack, an' I left Luke Trevor, as he said he'd prefer to come to evenin' service, an' Billy said he'd like to stay with Luke."

By this time a number of boats had put their rough-clad crews on the deck, and already a fair congregation was mustered. Shaking of hands,

salutations, question and reply, were going briskly on all round, with here and there a little mild chaffing, and occasionally a hearty laugh, while now and then the fervent "thank God" and "praise the Lord" revealed the spirits of the speakers.

"You mentioned the name of Billy just now," said Captain Bream, drawing Joe Davidson aside. "Is he a man or a boy?"

"He's a boy, sir, though he don't like to be reminded o' the fact," said Joe with a laugh. "He's the son of our skipper who was drowned—an' a good boy he is, though larky a bit. But that don't do him no harm, bless ye."

"I wonder," returned the captain, "if he is the boy some lady friends of mine are so fond of, who was sent up to London some time ago to—"

"That's him, sir," interrupted Joe; "it was Billy as was sent to Lun'on; by the wish of a Miss Ruth Dont-rap-me, or some such name. I never can remember it rightly, but she's awful fond o' the fisher folks."

"Ah, I know Miss Ruth Dotropy also," said the captain. "Strange that I should find this Billy that they're all so fond of in the new *Evening Star*. I must pay your smack a visit soon, Davidson, for I have a particular interest in her."

"I'll be proud to see you aboard her, sir,' returned

Joe. "Won't you come after service? The calm will last a good while, I think."

"Well, perhaps I may."

The conversation was interrupted here by a general move to the vessel's hold, where the usual arrangements had been made—a table for a pulpit and fish-boxes for seats.

"Do you feel well enough to speak to us to-day, Captain Bream?" asked the skipper of the mission ship.

"Oh yes, I'll be happy to do so. The trip out has begun to work wonders already," said the captain.

Now, the truth of that proverb, "One man may take a horse to the water, but ten men can't make him drink," is very often illustrated in the course of human affairs. You may even treat a donkey in the same way, and the result will be similar.

Joe Davidson had brought John Gunter to the mission ship in the earnest hope that he would drink at the gospel fountain, but, after having got him there, Joe found that, so far from drinking, Gunter would not even go down to the services at all. On this occasion he said that he preferred to remain on deck, and smoke his pipe.

Unknown to all the world, save himself, John Gunter was at that time in a peculiarly unhappy state of mind. His condition was outwardly manifested in the form of additional surliness.

"You're like a bear with a sore head," Spivin had said to him when in the boat on the way to the service.

"More like a black-face baboon wid de cholera," said Zulu.

Invulnerable alike to chaff and to earnest advice, Gunter sat on the fore-hatch smoking, while psalms of praise were rising from the hold.

Now, it was the little silver watch which caused all this trouble to Gunter. Bad as the man was, he had never been an absolute thief until the night on which he had robbed Ruth Dotropy. The horror depicted in her pretty, innocent face when he stopped her had left an impression on his mind which neither recklessness nor drink could remove, and thankfully would he have returned the watch if he had known the young lady's name or residence. Moreover, he was so inexperienced and timid in this new line of life, that he did not know how to turn the watch into cash with safety, and had no place in which to conceal it. On the very day about which we write, seeing the Coper not far off, the unhappy man had thrust the watch into his trousers pocket with the intention of bartering it with the Dutchman for rum, if he should get the chance. Small chance indeed, with Joe Davidson for his skipper! but there is no accounting for the freaks of the guilty.

The watch was now metaphorically burning a hole in Gunter's pocket, and, that pocket being somewhat similar in many respects to the pockets of average schoolboys, Ruth's pretty little watch lay in company with a few coppers, a bit of twine, a broken clasp-knife, two buttons, a short pipe, a crumpled tract of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, and a half-finished quid of tobacco.

But although John Gunter would not drink of his own free will, he could not easily avoid the water of life that came rushing to him up the hatchway and filled his ears. It came to him first, as we have said, in song; and the words of the hymn, "Sinner, list to the loving call," passed not only his outer and inner ear, but dropped into his soul and disturbed him.

Then he got a surprise when Captain Bream's voice resounded through the hold,—there was something so very deep and metallic about it, yet so tender and musical. But the greatest surprise of all came when the captain, without a word of preface or statement as to where his text was to be found, looked his expectant audience earnestly in the face, and said slowly, "Thou shalt not steal."

Poor Captain Bream! nothing was further from his thoughts than the idea that any one listening to him was actually a thief! but he had made up his mind to press home, with the Spirit's blessing, the

great truth that the man who refuses to accept salvation in Jesus Christ robs God of the love and honour that are His due; robs his wife and children and fellow-men of the good example and Christian service which he was fitted and intended to exert, and robs himself, so to speak, of Eternal Life.

The captain's arguments had much weight in the hold, but they had no weight on deck. Many of his shafts of reason were permitted to pierce the tough frames of the rugged men before him, and lodge with good influence in tender hearts, but they all fell pointless on the deck above. It was the pure unadulterated Word of God, "without note or comment," that was destined that day to penetrate the iron heart of John Gunter, and sink down into his soul. "*Thou shalt not steal!*" That was all of the sermon that Gunter heard; the rest fell on deaf ears, for these words continued to burn into his very soul. Influenced by the new and deep feelings that had been aroused in him, he pulled the watch from his pocket with the intention of hurling it into the sea, but the thought that he would still deserve to be called *a thief* caused him to hesitate.

"Hallo! Gunter, what pretty little thing is that you 've got?"

The words were uttered by Dick Herring of the *White Cloud*, who, being like-minded with John, had remained on deck like him to smoke and lounge.

"You 've got no business wi' that," growled Gunter, as he closed his hand on the watch, and thrust it back into his pocket.

"I didn't say I had, mate," retorted Herring, with a puff of contempt, which at the same time emptied his mouth and his spirit.

Herring said no more; but when the service was over, and the men were chatting about the deck, he quietly mentioned what he had seen, and some of the waggish among the crew came up to Gunter and asked him, with significant looks and laughs, what time o' day it was.

At first Gunter replied in his wonted surly manner; but at last, feeling that the best way would be to put a bold face on the matter, he said with an off-hand laugh—

"Herring thinks he 's made a wonderful discovery, but surely there 's nothing very strange in a man buyin' a little watch for his sweetheart."

"You don't mean to say that *you* have a sweetheart, do you?" said a youth of about seventeen, who had a tendency to be what is styled cheeky.

Gunter turned on him with contempt.

"Well, now," he replied, "if I had a smooth baby-face like yours I would *not* say as I had, but bein' a man, you see, I may ventur' to say that I have."

"Come, Gunter, you 're too hard on 'im," cried Spivin; "I don't believe you 've bought a watch for

her at all; at least if you have, it must be a pewter one."

Thus taunted, Gunter resolved to carry out the bold line of action. "What d'ee call that?" he cried, pulling out the watch and holding it up to view.

Captain Bream chanced to be an amused witness of this little scene, but his expression changed to one of amazement when he beheld the peculiar and unmistakable watch which, years before, he had given to Ruth Dotropy's father. Recovering himself quickly he stepped forward.

"A very pretty little thing," he said, "and looks uncommonly like silver. Let me see it."

He held out his hand, and Gunter gave it to him without the slightest suspicion, of course, that he knew anything about it. "Yes, undoubtedly it is silver, and a very curious style of article too," continued the captain in a low off-hand tone. "You've no objection to my taking it to the cabin to look at it more carefully?"

Of course Gunter had no objection, though a sensation of uneasiness arose within him, especially when Captain Bream asked him to go below with him, and whispered Joe Davidson in a low tone, as he passed him, to shut the cabin skylight.

No sooner were they below, with the cabin-door shut, than the captain looked steadily in the man's face, and said—

"Gunter, you stole this watch from a young lady in Yarmouth."

An electric shock could not have more effectually stunned the convicted fisherman. He gazed at the captain in speechless surprise. Then his fists clenched, a rush of blood came to his face, and a fierce oath rose to his white lips as he prepared to deny the charge.

"Stop!" said the captain, impressively, and there was nothing of severity or indignation in his voice or look. "Don't commit yourself, Gunter. See, I place the watch on this table. If you bought it to give to your sweetheart, take it up. If you stole it from a pretty young lady in one of the rows of Yarmouth some months ago, and would now wish me to restore it to her—for I know her and the watch well—let it lie."

Gunter looked at the captain, then at the watch, and hesitated. Then his head drooped, and in a low voice he said—

"I am guilty, sir."

Without a word more, Captain Bream laid his hand on the poor man's shoulder and pressed it. Gunter knew well what was meant. He went down on his knees. The captain kneeled beside him, and in a deep, intensely earnest voice, claimed forgiveness of the sin that had been confessed, and prayed that the sinner's soul

might be there and then cleansed in the precious blood of Jesus.

John Gunter was completely broken down; tears rolled over his cheeks, and it required all his great physical strength to enable him to keep down the sobs that well-nigh choked him.

Fishermen of the North Sea are tough. Their eyes are not easily made to swell or look red by salt water, whether it come from the ocean without or the mightier ocean within. When Gunter had risen from his knees and wiped his eyes with the end of a comforter, which had probably been worked under the superintendence of Ruth herself, there were no signs of emotion left—only a subdued look on his weatherworn face.

"I give myself up, sir," he said, "to suffer what punishment is due."

"No punishment is due, my man. Jesus has borne all the punishment due to you and me. In regard to man, you have restored that which you took away, and well do I know that the young lady—like her Master—forgives freely. I will return the watch to her. You can go back to your comrades—nobody shall ever hear more about this. If they chaff you, or question you, just say nothing, and smile at them."

"But—but, sir," said Gunter, moving uneasily,

"I ain't used to smilin'. I—I've bin so used to look gruff that—"

"Look gruff, then, my man," interrupted the captain, himself unable to repress a smile. "If you 're not gruff in your heart, it won't matter much what you look like. Just look gruff, an' keep your mouth shut, and they 'll soon let you alone."

Acting on this advice, John Gunter returned to his mates looking gruffer, if possible, and more taciturn than ever, but radically changed, from that hour, in soul and spirit.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CLIMAX REACHED AT LAST.

As the calm weather continued in the afternoon, Joe Davidson tried to persuade Captain Bream to pay the *Evening Star* a visit, but the latter felt that the excitement and exertion of preaching to such earnest and thirsting men had been more severe than he had expected. He therefore excused himself, saying that he would lie down in his bunk for a short time, so as to be ready for the evening service.

It was arranged that the skipper of the mission smack should conduct that service, and he was to call the captain when they were ready to begin. When the time came, however, it was found that the exhausted invalid was so sound asleep that they did not like to disturb him.

But although Captain Bream was a heavy sleeper and addicted to sonorous snoring, there were some things in nature through which even he could not slumber; and one of these things proved to be a hymn as sung by the fishermen of the North Sea!

When, therefore, the Lifeboat hymn burst forth in tones that no cathedral organ ever equalled, and shook the timbers of the mission ship from stem to stern, the captain turned round, yawned, and opened his eyes wide, and when the singers came to—

"Leave the poor old stranded wreck, and pull for the shore,"

he leaped out of his bunk with tremendous energy.

Pulling his garments into order, running his fingers through his hair, and trying to look as if he had not been asleep, he slipped quietly into the hold and sat down on a box behind the speaker, where he could see the earnest faces of the rugged congregation brought into strong relief by the light that streamed down the open hatchway.

What the preacher said, or what his subject was, Captain Bream never knew, for, before he could bring his mind to bear on it, his eyes fell on an object which seemed to stop the very pulsations of his heart, while his face grew pale. Fortunately he was himself in the deep shadow of the deck, and could not be easily observed.

Yet the object which created such a powerful sensation in the captain's breast was not in itself calculated to cause amazement or alarm, for it was nothing more than a pretty-faced, curly-haired fisher-boy, who, with lips parted and his bright eyes gazing intently, was listening to the preacher with

all his powers. Need we say that it was our friend Billy Bright, and that in his fair face Captain Bream thought, or rather felt, that he recognised the features of his long-lost sister?

With a strong effort the captain restrained his feelings and tried to listen, but in vain. Not only were his eyes riveted on the young face before him, but his whole being seemed to be absorbed by it. The necessity of keeping still, however, gave him time to make up his mind as to how he should act, so that when the service was brought to a close, he appeared on deck without a trace of his late excitement visible.

"What lad is this?" he asked, going up to Joe, who was standing close to Billy.

"This," said Joe, laying his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder, "is Billy Bright, son of the late owner of the old *Evenin' Star*."

"What!" exclaimed the captain, unable to repress his surprise, "son of the widow who owns the *new Evening Star?* then that proves that your mother *must* be alive?"

"In *course* she is!" returned Billy, with a look of astonishment.

"Come down to the cabin with me, Billy," said the captain, with increasing excitement. "I want to have a chat with you about your mother."

Our little hero, although surprised, at once com-

plied with the invitation, taking the opportunity, however, to wink at Zulu in passing, and whisper his belief that the old gen'l'man was mad.

Setting Billy on a locker in front of him, Captain Bream began at once.

"Is your mother alive, Bil,—tut, of course she's alive; I mean, is she well—in good health?"

Billy became still more convinced that Captain Bream was mad, but answered that his mother was well, and that she had never been ill in her life to the best of his knowledge.

While speaking, Billy glanced round the cabin in some anxiety as to how he should escape if the madman should proceed to violence. He made up his mind that if the worst should come to the worst, he would dive under the table, get between the old gentleman's legs, trip him up, and bolt up the companion before he could regain his feet. Relieved by the feeling that his mind was made up, he waited for more.

"Billy," resumed the captain, after a long gaze at the boy's features, "is your mother like you?"

"I should think not," replied Billy with some indignation. "She's a woman, you know, an' I'm a—a—man."

"Yes—of course"—murmured the captain to himself, "there can be no doubt about it—none whatever—every gesture—every look!"—(then aloud)—

"What was her name, my boy?"

"Her name, sir? why, her name's Bright, of course."

"Yes, yes, but I mean her maiden name."

Billy was puzzled. "If you mean the name my father used to call 'er," he said, "it was Nell."

"Ah! that's it—nearly, at least. Nellie she used to be known by. Yes, yes, but that's not what I want to know. Can you tell me what her name was before she was married?"

"Well now, that *is* odd," answered Billy, "I've bin pumped somethink in this way before, though nuffin good came of it as I knows on. No, I *don't* know what she was called afore she was married."

"Did you ever hear of the name of Bream?" asked the captain anxiously.

"Oh yes, I've heerd o' that name," said the boy, promptly. "There's a fish called bream, you know."

It soon became evident to poor Captain Bream that nothing of importance was to be learned from Billy, he therefore made up his mind at once as to how he should act. Feeling that, with such a possibility unsettled, he would be utterly unfit for his duties with the fleet, he resolved to go straight to Yarmouth.

"What is your mother's address?" he asked.

Billy gave it him.

"Now my boy, I happen to be much interested in

your mother, so I 'm goin' to Yarmouth on purpose to see her."

"It 's wery good o' you, sir, an' if you takes your turn ashore afore we do, just give mother my respec's an' say I 'm all alive and kickin'."

"I will, my boy," said the Captain, patting Billy on the head and actually stooping to kiss his forehead affectionately, after which he gave him leave to return on deck.

"I don' know how it is," said Billy to Zulu afterwards, "but I 've took a likin' for that old man, an' at the same time a queer sort o' fear of 'im; I can't git it out o' my noddle that he 's goin' to Yarmouth to inweigle my mother to marry him!"

Zulu showed all his teeth and gums, shut his eyes, gave way to a burst of laughter, and said "Nonsense!"

"It may be nonsense," retorted Billy, "but if I thought he really meant it, I would run my head butt into his breadbasket, an' drive 'im overboard."

Explaining to the surprised and rather disappointed skipper of the mission vessel that an unexpected turn of affairs required his immediate presence in Yarmouth, the captain asked what means there were of getting to land.

"One of our fleet, the *Rainbow*, starts to-morrow morning, sir," was the reply; "so you can go

without loss of time. But I hope we shall see you again."

"Oh yes, please God, I shall come off again—you may depend on that, for I've taken a great fancy to the men of the Short Blue, although I've been so short a time with them—moreover, I owe service as well as gratitude to the Mission for sending me here."

Accordingly next morning he set sail with a fair wind, and in due course found himself on shore. He went straight to the old abode of Mrs. Dotropy, and, to his great satisfaction, found Ruth there. He also found young Dalton, which was not quite so much to his satisfaction, but Ruth soon put his mind at rest by saying—

"Oh! Captain Bream, I'm *so* glad to have this unexpected visit, because, for months and months past I have wanted you to go with me to visit a particular place in Yarmouth, and you have always slipped through my fingers; but I'm determined that you shan't escape again."

"That's odd, my dear," returned the captain, "because my object in coming here is to take *you* to a certain place in Yarmouth, and, although I have not had the opportunity of letting you slip through my fingers, I've no doubt you'd do so if you were tempted away by a bait that begins with a D."

"How dare you, sir!" said Ruth, blushing, laughing, and frowning all at once—"but no. Even D.

will fail in this instance—for my business is urgent."

"Well, Miss Ruth, my business is urgent also. The question therefore remains, which piece of business is to be gone about first."

"How can you be so ungallant? Are not a lady's wishes to be considered before those of a gentleman? Come, sir, are you ready to go? *I* am quite ready, and fortunately D., to whom you dared to refer just now, has gone to the post with a letter."

Although extremely anxious to have his mind set at rest, Captain Bream gave in with his accustomed good-nature, and went out with Ruth to settle *her* business first.

Rejoiced to have her little schemes at last so nearly brought to an issue, the eager girl hurried through the town till she came to one of its narrow Rows.

"Well, my dear," said the captain, "it is at all events a piece of good luck that so far you have led *me* in the very direction I desired to lead *you*."

"Indeed? Well, that is odd. But after all," returned Ruth with a sudden feeling of depression, "it *may* turn out to be a wild-goose chase."

"*What* may turn out to be a wild-goose chase?"

"This—this fancy—this hope of mine, but you shall know directly—come."

Ruth was almost running by this time, and the

captain, being still far from strong, found it difficult to keep up with her.

"This way, down here," she cried, turning a corner.

"What, *this* way?" exclaimed the captain in amazement.

"Yes, why not?" said Ruth, reflecting some of his surprise as she looked up in his face.

"Why—why, because this is the very Row I wanted to bring you to!"

"That *is* strange—but—but never mind just now; you 'll explain afterwards. Come along."

Poor Ruth was too much excited to attend to any other business but that on which her heart was set just then; and fear lest her latest castle should prove to have no foundations and should fall like so many others in ruins at her feet, caused her to tremble.

"Here is the door," she said at last, coming to a sudden halt before widow Bright's dwelling, and pressing both hands on her palpitating heart to keep it still.

"Wonders will never cease!" exclaimed the captain. "This is the very door to which I intended to bring *you*."

Ruth turned her large blue eyes on her friend with a look that made them larger and, if possible, bluer than ever. She suddenly began to feel as deep an interest in the captain's business as in her own.

"*This* door?" she said, pointing to it emphatically.

"Yes, *that* door. Widow Bright lives there, don't she?"

"Yes—oh! yes," said Ruth, squeezing her heart tighter.

"Well, I've come here to search for a long-lost sister."

"Oh!" gasped Ruth.

But she got no time to gasp anything more, for the impatient captain had pushed the door open without knocking, and stood in the middle of the widow's kitchen.

Mrs. Bright was up to the elbows in soap-suds at the moment, busy with some of the absent Billy's garments. Beside her sat Mrs. Joe Davidson, endeavouring to remove, with butter, a quantity of tar with which the "blessed babby" had recently besmeared herself.

They all looked up at the visitors, but all remained speechless, as if suddenly paralysed, for the expression on our big captain's face was wonderful, as well as indescribable. Mrs. Bright opened her eyes to their widest, also her mouth, and dropped the Billy-garments. Mrs. Davidson's buttery hands became motionless; so did the "babby's" tarry visage. For three seconds this lasted. Then the captain said, in the deepest bass notes he ever reached—

"Sister Nellie!"

A wild scream from Mrs. Bright was the reply, as she sprang at Captain Bream, seized him in her arms, and covered the back of his neck with soapsuds.

The castle was destined to stand, after all! Ruth's joy overflowed. She glanced hurriedly round for some object on which to expend it. There was nothing but the "blessed babby"—and that was covered with tar; but genuine feeling does not stick at trifles. Ruth caught up the filthy little creature, pressed it to her bounding heart, wept, and laughed, and covered it with passionate kisses to such an extent that her own fair face became thoroughly besmeared, and it cost Mrs. Joe an additional half hour's labour to get her clean, besides an enormous expenditure of butter—though that was selling at the time at the high figure of 1s. 6d. a pound!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST.

THERE came a day, not very long after the events narrated in the previous chapter, when a grand wedding took place in Yarmouth.

But it was not meant to be a grand one, by any means. Quite the contrary. The parties principally concerned were modest, retiring, and courted privacy. But the more they courted privacy, the more did that condition—like a coy maiden—fly away from them.

The name of the bride was Ruth, and the name of the bridegroom began,—as Captain Bream was fond of saying—with a D.

Neither bride nor groom had anything particular to do with the sea, yet that wedding might have easily been mistaken for a fisherman's wedding—as well as a semi-public one, so numerous were the salts—young and old—who attended it; some with, and others without, invitation. You see, the ceremony being performed in the old parish church, any one who chose had a right to be there and look on.

The reason of this nautical character of the wedding was not far to seek, for had not the bridegroom—whose name began with a D.—risked his life in rescuing from the deep a Bright—we might almost say the brightest—young life belonging to the fishing fleets of the North Sea? And was not the lovely bride one of the best and staunchest friends of the fisherman? And was she not mixed up, somehow, with the history of that good old sea-captain—if not actually a relation of his—who preached so powerfully, and who laboured so earnestly to turn seamen from darkness to light? And had not the wedding been expressly delayed until the period of one of the smacks' return to port, so that six fishermen—namely, Joe Davidson, Ned Spivin, Luke Trevor, John Gunter, Billy Bright, and Zulu—might be invited guests? Besides these, there were the skipper and crew of the gospel-ship which was also in port at that time; and other fishermen guests there were, known by such names as Mann, White, Snow, Johnston, Goodchild, Brown, Bowers, Tooke, Rogers, Snell, Moore, Roberts, and many more—all good men and true—who formed part of that great population of 12,000 which is always afloat on the North Sea.

Besides these guests, and a host of others who were attracted by the unusual interest displayed in this wedding, there were several people with whom

we may claim some slight acquaintance,—such as Miss Jessie Seaward and her sister, who wept much with joy, and laughed not a little at being so foolish as to cry, and Liffie Lee, who was roused with excitement to the condition of a half-tamed wild-cat, but was so dressed up and brushed down and washed out, that her best friend might have failed to recognise her. But if we go on, we shall never have done—for the whole of Yarmouth seemed to be there—high and low, rich and poor! Of course Mrs. Dotropy was also there, grand, confused, sententious as ever, amiable, and unable to command her feelings—in a state, so to speak, of melting magnificence. And a great many "swell" people —as Billy styled them—came down from London, for Mrs. Dotropy, to their disgust, had positively refused to have the wedding in the West End mansion, for reasons best known to herself.

You should have heard the cheer that followed the happy couple when they finally left the church and drove away! We do not refer to the cheering of the multitude; that, though very well in its way, was a mere mosquito-squeak to the deep-toned deafening, reverberating shout of an enthusiasm —born upon the sea, fed on the bread and water of life, strengthened alike by the breezes of success and the gales of adversity—which burst in hurricane violence from the leathern lungs and throats

of the North Sea fishermen! We leave it, reader, to your imagination.

There was no wedding breakfast proper, for the happy pair left Yarmouth immediately after the knot was tied, but there was a small select party which drove off in a series of cabs to a feast prepared in a certain cottage not far from the town. This party was composed chiefly of fishermen and their wives and children. It was headed by Captain Bream and his sister Mrs. Bright. In the same carriage were Mrs. Dotropy, the Miss Seawards, and Mrs. Joe Davidson and her baby. It was a big old-fashioned carriage capable of holding six inside, and Billy Bright "swarmed" upon the dickey.

Arrived at the cottage, which had a fine lawn in front and commanded a splendid view of the sea, Captain Bream got down, took up a position at the garden-gate, and, shaking hands with each guest as he or she entered, bade him or her welcome to "Short Blue Cottage!"

"'Tis a pleasant anchorage," he said to the sisters Seaward as they passed in, "very pleasant at the end of life's voyage. Praise the Lord who gave it me! Show them the way, Nellie; they'll know it better before long. You'll find gooseberry bushes in the back garden, an' the theological library in the starboard attic. Their own berths are on the ground-floor."

You may be sure that with such a host the guests were not long in making themselves at home.

Captain Bream had not invited the party merely to a wedding feast. It was the season of fruits and flowers, and he had set his heart on his friends making a day of it. Accordingly, he had made elaborate preparations for enjoyment. With that practical sagacity which frequently distinguishes the nautical mind, he had provided bowls and quoits for the men; battledore and shuttlecock for the younger women; football and cricket and hoops, with some incomprehensible Eastern games for the children, and a large field at the side of the cottage afforded room for all without much chance of collision.

The feast was, of course, a strictly temperance one, and we need scarcely say it was all the more enjoyable on that account.

"You see, my friends," said the host, referring to this in one of his brief speeches, "as long as it may please God to leave me at anchor in this snug port, I'll never let a drop o' strong drink enter my doors except in the form of physic, and even then I'll have the bottle labelled 'poison—to be taken under doctor's prescription.' So, my lads—my friends, I mean, beggin' the ladies' pardon—you'll have to drink this toast, and all the other toasts, in lemonade, ginger beer, soda water, seltzer, zoedone, tea, coffee,

or cold water, all of which wholesome beverages have been supplied in overflowing abundance to this fallen world, and are to be found represented on this table."

"Hear! hear!" from John Gunter, and it was wonderful to hear the improvement in the tone of Gunter's voice since he had left off strong drink His old foe, but now fast friend, Luke Trevor, who sat beside him, echoed the "hear! hear!" with such enthusiasm that all the others burst into a laugh, and ended in a hearty cheer.

"Now, fill up—fill up, lads," continued the captain. "Let it be a bumper, whatever tipple you may choose. If our drink is better than it used to be, our cups ought not to be less full—and my toast is worthy of all honour. I drink to the success and prosperity, temporal and spiritual, of the North Sea Trawlers"—(there was a symptom of a gathering cheer at this point, but the captain checked it with a raised finger) "especially to that particular fleet which goes by the name of the *'Short Blue'!"*

The pent-up storm burst forth now with unrestrained vehemence, insomuch that three little ragged boys who had climbed on the low garden wall to watch proceedings, fell off backwards as if shot by the mere sound!

Observing this, and being near them, Mrs. Bright rose, quietly leaned over the wall, and emptied a

basket of strawberries on their heads by way of consolation.

We cannot afford space for the captain's speech in full. Suffice it to say that he renewed his former promise to re-visit the fleet and spend some time among the fishermen as often as he could manage to do so, and wound up by coupling the name of Joe Davidson, skipper of the *Evening Star*, with the toast.

Whereupon, up started Joe with flashing eyes; (intense enthusiasm overcoming sailor-like modesty;) and delivered a speech in which words seemed to tumble out of him anyhow and everyhow—longwise, shortwise, askew, and upside-down—without much reference to grammar, but with a powerful tendency in the direction of common sense. We have not space for this speech either, but we give the concluding words:

"I tell 'ee wot it is, boys. Cap'n Bream has drunk prosperity to the *Short Blue*, an' so have we, for we love it, but there 's another *Short Blue*—"

A perfect storm of cheering broke forth at this point and drowned Joe altogether. It would probably have blown over the three ragged boys a second time, but they were getting used to such fire, and, besides, were engaged with strawberries.

"There's another *Short Blue*," resumed Joe, when the squall was over, "which my missis an' me was

talkin' about this very day, when our blessed babby fell slap out o' bed an' set up such a howl- -"

Joe could get no further, because of the terrific peals of laughter which his words, coupled with the pathetic sincerity of his expression, drew forth. Again and again he tried to speak, but his innocent look and his mighty shoulders, and tender voice, with the thoughts of that "blessed babby," were too much for his mates, so that he was obliged to finish off by shouting in a voice of thunder—

"Let's drink success to Short-Blue COTTAGE!" and, with a toss of his hand in the true North-Sea-salute style, sat down in a tempest of applause.

Yes, as an Irish fisherman remarked, "it was a great day intoirely," that day at *Short Blue Cottage*, and as no description can do it full justice, we will turn to other matters—remarking, however, before quitting the subject, that we do not tell the reader the exact spot where the cottage is situated, as publicity on this point might subject our modest captain to much inconvenience!

"Billy," said Captain Bream one day, a few months after the wedding-day just described, "come with me to the Theological Library; I want to have a chat with 'ee, lad."

Billy followed his new-found uncle, and sat down opposite to him.

"Now, lad, the time has come when you and I

must have it out. You're fond o' hard work, I'm told."

"Well, uncle, I won't say as I'm exactly fond of it, but I don't object to it."

"So far good," returned the captain. "Well, you know I'm your uncle, an' I've got a goodish lot of tin, an' I'm goin' to leave the most of it to your mother—for she's the only relation I have on earth, —but you needn't expect that I'm goin' to leave it to *you* after her."

"I never said as I *did* expect that, uncle," said Billy with such a straightforward look of simplicity that the captain burst into one of his thundering laughs.

"Good, my boy," he said, in a more confidential tone. "Well, then, this is how the matter stands. I've long held the opinion that those who *can* work *should* work, and that all or nearly all the cash that people have to spare should be given or left to those who *can't* work—such as poor invalids—specially women—and those who have come to grief one way or another, and lost the use o' their limbs."

"Right you are, uncle," said Billy with strong emphasis.

"Glad you agree so heartily, boy. Well, that bein' so, I mean to leave the interest of all that I have to your dear mother as long as she lives—except a legacy to the Miss Seawards and some

other poor folk that I know of. Meanwhile, they have agreed, as long as I live, to stay wi' me here in this cottage, as my librarians and assistants in the matter of Theology. I had a tough job to get 'em to agree, but I managed it at last. So you see, Billy, I don't mean to leave you a sixpence."

"Well, uncle," said Billy with a quiet look, "I don't care a brass farden!"

Again the captain laughed. "But," he continued, "I 'm very fond o' you, Billy, an' there's no reason why I shouldn't help you, to help yourself. So, if you 're willin', I 'll send you to the best of schools, and after that to college, an' give you the best of education,—in short, make a man of you, an' put you in the way of makin' your fortune."

Captain Bream looked steadily into the fair boy's handsome face as he made this glowing statement; but, somewhat to his disappointment, he got no responsive glance from Billy. On the contrary, the boy became graver and graver, and at last his mind seemed lost in meditation while his gaze was fixed on the floor.

"What think ye, lad?" demanded the captain.

Billy seemed to awake as from a dream, and then, looking and speaking more like a man than he had ever done before, he said—

"It is kind of you, uncle—very kind—but my dear dad once said *he* would make a man of me,

and he *did!* I'll do my best to larn as much as ever I can o' this world's larnin', but I'll never leave the sea."

"Now, my boy," said the captain, "think well before you decide. You could do far more good if you were a highly educated man, you know"

"Right you *may* be, uncle, an' I don't despise edication, by no means, but some folk are born to it, and others ain't. Besides, good of the best kind can be done without *much* edication, when the heart's right an' the will strong, as I've seed before now on the North Sea."

"I'm sorry you look at it this way, Billy, for I don't see that I can do much for you if you determine to remain a fisherman."

"Oh! yes, you can, uncle," cried Billy, rising up in his eagerness and shaking back his curly hair. "You can do this. You can take the money you intended to waste on my schoolin' an' send out books an' tracts and medicines, an' all sorts o' things to the fishin' fleets. An' if you're awful rich—as you seem to be by the way you talk—you can give some thousands o' pounds an' fit out two or three more smacks as you did the noo *Evenin' Star*, an' hand 'em over to the Mission to become gospel-ships to the fleets that have got none yet. That's the way to do good wi' your coppers. As for me—my daddy was a fisherman and my mother was a

fisherman's wife, and I 'm a fisherman to the backbone. What my father was before me I mean to be after him, so, God permittin', I 'll sail wi' Joe Davidson till I 'm old enough to take command o' the *Evenin' Star ;* and then I 'll stick through thick an' thin to the North Sea, and live and die a fisherman of the *Short Blue !*"

Billy Bright's determination was unalterable, so Captain Bream fell in with it, and heartily set about that part of the work which his nephew had recommended to him.

Whether he and Billy will remain of the same mind to the end, the future alone can show—we cannot tell; but this we—you and I, Reader—can do if we will—we can sympathise with our enthusiastic young Trawler, and do what in us lies to soften the hard lot of the fisherman, by aiding those whose life-work it is to fish for souls of men, and to toil summer and winter, in the midst of life and death, tempest and cold, to rescue the perishing on the North Sea.

Edinburgh: Printed by T. and A. Constable.

THE "PRIZE" SERIES.

Demy 8vo, gilt edges. 5s. each.

1. THE DAYS OF BRUCE. By GRACE AGUILAR.
2. BARRIERS BURNED AWAY. By E. P. ROE.
3. BEN HUR. By LEW WALLACE.
4. HOME INFLUENCE. By GRACE AGUILAR.
5. OPENING OF A CHESTNUT BURR. By E. P. ROE.
6. FROM PLOUGHSHARE TO PULPIT. By GORDON STABLES, M.D., R.N.
7. STRANGE YET TRUE. By Dr. MACAULAY.
8. THE LAMPLIGHTER. By MARIA S. CUMMINS.
9. STEADY YOUR HELM. By W. O. METCALFE.
10. THE MOTHER'S RECOMPENSE. By GRACE AGUILAR.
11. THE ROVER CARAVAN. By GORDON STABLES.
12. WESTWARD HO! By CHARLES KINGSLEY.
13. NOR'ARD OF THE DOGGER. By E. J. MATHER.
14. NESTLETON MAGNA. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
15. JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN. By Mrs. CRAIK.
16. MATTHEW MELLOWDEW. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
17. A FIGHT FOR FREEDOM. By GORDON STABLES.
18. THE RIP'S REDEMPTION. By E. LIVINGSTON PRESCOTT
19. OLD MORTALITY. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
20. OFF TO KLONDYKE. By GORDON STABLES.
21. THE PEARL DIVERS. By GORDON STABLES.
22. YOKED TOGETHER. By ELLEN DAVIS.
23. ST. ELMO. By A. J. E. WILSON.
24. THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. With forty illustrations drawn by Sir JOHN GILBERT.
25. IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND. By CHAS. READE.
26. GASCOYNE. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
27. FACE TO FACE WITH NAPOLEON. By O. V. CAINE.
28. IN THE YEAR OF WATERLOO. By O. V. CAINE.
29. INFELICE. By A. J. E. WILSON.
30. A TALE OF TWO CITIES. By CHARLES DICKENS.
31. THE LIFEBOAT. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
32. THE LIGHTHOUSE. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
33. SHIFTING WINDS. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
34. THE MILL ON THE FLOSS. By GEORGE ELIOT.
35. ONE OF THE RED SHIRTS. By H. HAYENS.

THE HALF-HOUR LIBRARY OF TRAVEL, NATURE, AND SCIENCE.

In attractive binding, and containing nearly 100 Illustrations in each volume. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. each. Gilt edges, 3s.

1. HALF-HOURS ON THE QUARTER-DECK. The Spanish Armada to Sir Cloudesley Shovel, 1670.
2. HALF-HOURS IN AIR AND SKY. The Marvels of the Universe.
3. HALF-HOURS IN FIELD AND FOREST. By Rev. J. G. WOOD, M.A.
4. HALF-HOURS IN THE DEEP. The Nature and Wealth of the Sea.
5. HALF-HOURS IN THE TINY WORLD. The Wonders of Insect Life.
6. HALF-HOURS IN THE HOLY LAND. By NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D.
7. HALF-HOURS IN MANY LANDS. Arctic, Torrid, and Temperate.
8. HALF-HOURS WITH A NATURALIST. Rambles near the Seashore. By the Rev. J. G. WOOD, M.A.
9. HALF-HOURS IN THE FAR NORTH. Life amid Ice and Snow.
10. HALF-HOURS IN THE FAR SOUTH. The People and Scenery of the Tropics.
11. HALF-HOURS IN THE FAR EAST. Among the People and Wonders of India.
12. HALF-HOURS IN WOODS AND WILDS. Adventures of Sport and Travel.
13. HALF-HOURS UNDERGROUND. Volcanoes, Mines, and Caves.
14. HALF-HOURS AT SEA. Stories of Voyage, Adventure, and Wreck.
15. HALF-HOURS IN THE WIDE WEST. Over Mountains.
16. HALF-HOURS IN EARLY NAVAL ADVENTURE.

THE BOYS' HOLIDAY LIBRARY.

A New Series of Stories of Adventure for Boys, including copyright works by R. M. Ballantyne, O. V. Caine, Gordon Stables, and other well-known writers. Bound in attractive style, cloth extra, fully illustrated. Large crown 8vo, with full gilt edges. 2s. 6d. each.

1. GASCOYNE. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
2. THE BIG OTTER. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
3. FACE TO FACE WITH NAPOLEON. By O. V. CAINE.
4. IVANHOE. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
5. A FIGHT FOR FREEDOM. By GORDON STABLES.
6. THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS. By J. FENIMORE COOPER.
7. THE KING'S RECRUITS.
8. WESTWARD HO! By CHARLES KINGSLEY.
9. STEADY YOUR HELM. By W. C. METCALFE.
10. BARON AND SQUIRE. A STORY OF THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR.
11. THE ROVER CARAVAN. By GORDON STABLES.
12. ON THE WORLD'S ROOF. By J. MACDONALD OXLEY.
13. THE THREE MUSKETEERS. By ALEXANDRE DUMAS.
14. OFF TO KLONDYKE. By GORDON STABLES.
15. TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA.
16. IN THE SWING OF THE SEA. By J. M. OXLEY.
17. REMEMBER THE MAINE. By GORDON STABLES.
18. THE LADS OF LUNDA. By J. M. E. SAXBY.
19. ABOVEBOARD. By W. C. METCALFE.
20. THE ADVENTURES OF MR. VERDANT GREEN.
21. THE DUKE'S PAGE.
22. IN THE YEAR OF WATERLOO. By O. V. CAINE.
23. THE YOUNG FUR-TRADERS. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
24. UNGAVA. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
25. STRANGE YET TRUE. By Dr. MACAULAY.
26. FROM PLOUGHSHARE TO PULPIT. By GORDON STABLES.
27. THE CORAL ISLAND. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
28. THE GOLDEN DREAM. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
29. THE RED ERIC. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
30. THE WILD MAN OF THE WEST. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
31. THE LIFEBOAT. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
32. FREAKS ON THE FELLS. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
33. THE LIGHTHOUSE. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
34. SHIFTING WINDS. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
35. ON WAR'S RED TIDE. By GORDON STABLES.
36. CHARLES O'MALLEY. By CHARLES LEVER.
37. THE PEARL DIVERS. By GORDON STABLES.

THE GIRLS' HOLIDAY LIBRARY.

Bound in attractive style, cloth extra, fully illustrated.
Large crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. each.

1. THE CLOSE OF ST. CHRISTOPHER'S. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
2. NEW RELATIONS. A Story for Girls. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
3. THOSE THREE. A Story for Girls. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
4. LAUREL CROWNS. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
5. HOUSES ON WHEELS. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
6. THE LADY'S MANOR. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
7. ONLY SUSAN. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
8. UNDER THE LABURNUMS. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
9. THE GRIM HOUSE. By Mrs. MOLESWORTH.
10. THE CLEVEREST WOMAN IN ENGLAND. By L. T. MEADE.
11. TUDOR QUEENS AND PRINCESSES. By SARAH TYTLER.
12. LIZETTE. A Story for Girls. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
13. KATHERINE'S KEYS. By SARAH DOUDNEY.
14. LADY ROSALIND. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
15. DECIMA'S PROMISE. By AGNES GIBERNE.
16. DULCIBEL'S DAY-DREAM. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
17. THE STORY OF THE LIFE OF QUEEN VICTORIA. By W. W. TULLOCH. Revised by the late Queen. A New Edition with Postscript.
18. SILVER CHIMES. A Story for Children. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
19. DAPHNE'S DECISION; or, WHICH SHALL IT BE? By Mrs. MARSHALL.
20. CASSANDRA'S CASKET. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
21. POPPIES AND PANSIES. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
22. REX AND REGINA. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
23. STORIES OF THE CATHEDRAL CITIES OF ENGLAND. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
24. DEWDROPS AND DIAMONDS. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
25. HEATHER AND HAREBELL. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
26. THE ROSES OF RINGWOOD. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
27. IN THE PURPLE. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
28. EASTWARD HO! By Mrs. MARSHALL.

THE GIRLS' HOLIDAY LIBRARY—continued.

29. MISS CON; or, All Those Girls. By AGNES GIBERNE.
30. KATHLEEN. By AGNES GIBERNE.
31. ENID'S SILVER BOND. By AGNES GIBERNE.
32. BERYL AND PEARL. By AGNES GIBERNE.
33. ST. AUSTIN'S LODGE. By AGNES GIBERNE.
34. THE DALRYMPLES. By AGNES GIBERNE.
35. NUMBER THREE WINIFRED PLACE. By AGNES GIBERNE
36. "LEAST SAID, SOONEST MENDED." By AGNES GIBERNE
37. SWEETBRIAR. By AGNES GIBERNE.
38. COULYNG CASTLE. By AGNES GIBERNE.
39. AIMÉE. By AGNES GIBERNE.
40. THE ANDERSONS. By AGNES GIBERNE.
41. ALL SORTS. By L. T. MEADE.
42. LITTLE WOMEN AND GOOD WIVES. By L. M. ALCOTT.
43. THE MILL ON THE FLOSS. By GEORGE ELIOT.
44. A HARD MASTER. By H. M. CORNWALL LEGH.
45. LILLA THORN'S VOYAGE. By GRACE STEBBING.
46. THE MEASURE OF A MAN. By E. LIVINGSTON PRESCOTT.
47. UNSTORIED IN HISTORY. By GABRIELLE FESTING.
48. THE KEY TO THE RIDDLE. By MARGARET COMBE.

MEN WITH A MISSION.

A Series of Short Biographies. With Portraits. Small Crown 8vo. 1s. each.

By the Rev. JAMES ELLIS.

1. HENRY MORTON STANLEY.
2. CHARLES KINGSLEY.
3. LORD LAWRENCE.
4. HUGH LATIMER.
5. WILLIAM TYNDALE.
6. JOHN HOWARD.
7. DAVID LIVINGSTONE.
8. THOMAS CROMWELL.
9. LORD SHAFTESBURY.
10. GENERAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., LL.D., K.P.

THE ILLUSTRATED ENGLISH LIBRARY.

Crown 8vo. Illustrated. 2s. 6d. each.

1. THE HISTORY OF HENRY ESMOND. By W. M. THACKERAY.
2. THE HISTORY OF PENDENNIS. By W. M. THACKERAY.
3. THE NEWCOMES. By W. M. THACKERAY.
4. VANITY FAIR. By W. M. THACKERAY.
5. JANE EYRE. An Autobiography. By CHARLOTTE BRONTË.
6. SHIRLEY. A Tale. By CHARLOTTE BRONTË.
7. HYPATIA. By CHARLES KINGSLEY.
8. THE LAST OF THE BARONS. By LORD LYTTON.
9. THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII. By LORD LYTTON.
10. THE CAXTONS. By LORD LYTTON.
11. CHARLES O'MALLEY. By CHARLES LEVER.
12. CRANFORD. By Mrs. GASKELL.
13. THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD. By OLIVER GOLDSMITH.
14. THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
15. IVANHOE. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
16. OLD MORTALITY. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
17. THE PIRATE. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
18. ROB ROY. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
19. WAVERLEY. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
20. THE ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS.
21. ROBINSON CRUSOE. By DANIEL DEFOE.
22. JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN. By Mrs. CRAIK.
23. THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS. By J. FENIMORE COOPER.
24. THE SCARLET LETTER. By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.
25. THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES. By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.
26. THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE. By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.
27. ADAM BEDE. By GEORGE ELIOT.
28. A TALE OF TWO CITIES. By CHARLES DICKENS.
29. THE MILL ON THE FLOSS. By GEORGE ELIOT.

THE "LAUREL" SERIES.

Crown 8vo. Numerous Illustrations. 2s. each.

1. WINNING HIS LAURELS. By F. M. HOLMES.
2. THAT AGGRAVATING SCHOOLGIRL. By GRACE STEBBING.
3. WHAT A MAN SOWETH. By GRACE STEBBING.
4. THE YARL'S YACHT. By JESSIE M. E. SAXBY.
5. GRACE MURRAY. A Story. By ELLA STONE.
6. MR. ORDE'S GRANDCHILDREN. By CECILIA SELBY LOWNDES.
7. WHERE THE DEW FALLS IN LONDON. By SARAH DOUDNEY.
8. TOM AND HIS CROWS. By JESSIE M. E. SAXBY.
9. WATCH AND WATCH. By W. C. METCALFE.
10. THE VIKING BOYS. By JESSIE M. E. SAXBY.
11. WILL IT LIFT? By J. JACKSON WRAY.
12. A YOUNG STOWAWAY. By Mrs. GEORGE CORBETT.
13. A MAN EVERY INCH OF HIM. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
14. GOOD LUCK. By L. T. MEADE.
15. GARTON ROWLEY. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
16. THE BISHOP'S SHADOW. By I. T. THURSTON.
17. SIMON HOLMES: CARPENTER. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
18. SECRET OF THE MERE. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
19. EXILES OF THE TYROL. By Mrs. RAY.
20. A VERY ROUGH DIAMOND. By FLORENCE WARDEN.
21. PAUL MEGGITT'S DELUSION. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
22. THE UNCALLED. By P. L. DUNBAR.

THE "PILGRIM" SERIES.

POPULAR EDITIONS OF STANDARD BOOKS.

Crown 8vo, numerous Illustrations, 2s. each; with gilt edges, 2s. 6d. each.

1. BUNYAN'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.
2. BUNYAN'S HOLY WAR.
3. FOXE'S BOOK OF MARTYRS.
4. BEN-HUR. By LEW WALLACE.
5. THE LAMPLIGHTER. By MARIA S. CUMMINS.
6. UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. By H. B. STOWE.
7. ROBINSON CRUSOE. By DANIEL DEFOE.
8. MY DESIRE. By SUSAN WARNER.
9. NOBODY. By SUSAN WARNER.
10. THE FAIRCHILD FAMILY. By Mrs. SHERWOOD.
11. THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON.
12. ROMANCE OF NATURAL HISTORY. By P. H. GOSSE
13. GREAT MEN. By the late Rev. F. MYERS.
14. LITTLE WOMEN AND GOOD WIVES. By L. M. ALCOTT.
15. DRAYTON HALL. By JULIA MATHEWS.
16. THE END OF A COIL. By SUSAN WARNER.
17. GLEN LUNA. By ANNA WARNER.
18. DIANA. By SUSAN WARNER.
19. STEPHEN, M.D. By SUSAN WARNER.
20. MELBOURNE HOUSE. By SUSAN WARNER.
21. BIBLE WARNINGS. By Rev. Dr. NEWTON.
22. THE PHYSICIAN'S DAUGHTERS. By LUCY NELSON.
23. THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD. By E. WETHERELL.
24. DAISY. By SUSAN WARNER.
25. DAISY IN THE FIELD. By SUSAN WARNER.
26. NOR'ARD OF THE DOGGER. By E. J. MATHER.
27. SOLDIERS & SERVANTS OF CHRIST. By ANNA LEHRER.
28. QUEECHY. By SUSAN WARNER.
29. DARE TO DO RIGHT. By JULIA MATHEWS.
30. NETTIE'S MISSION. By JULIA MATHEWS.

31. YOKED TOGETHER. By ELLEN DAVIS.
32. OPENING OF A CHESTNUT BURR. By E. P. ROE.
33. ST. ELMO. By A. J. E. WILSON.
34. NAOMI. By Mrs. J. B. WEBB.
35. BARRIERS BURNED AWAY. By E. P. ROE.
36. WYCH HAZEL. By S. and A. WARNER.
37. THE GOLD OF CHICKAREE. A Sequel to "Wych Hazel."
38. THE OLD HELMET. By SUSAN WARNER.
39. A LETTER OF CREDIT. By SUSAN WARNER.
40. GENERAL GORDON. By Major SETON CHURCHILL.
41. A KNIGHT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. By E. P. ROE.
42. IN THE DAYS OF BRUCE. By GRACE AGUILAR.
43. HOME INFLUENCE. By GRACE AGUILAR.
44. A MOTHER'S RECOMPENSE. By GRACE AGUILAR.
45. THE VALE OF CEDARS. By GRACE AGUILAR.
46. THE GOLDEN LADDER. By S. and A. WARNER.
47. INFELICE. By A. J. E. WILSON.
48. AT THE MERCY OF TIBERIUS. By A. J. E. WILSON.
49. DORRINCOURT. By the Author of "Expelled."
50. WESTWARD HO! By CHARLES KINGSLEY.
51. HOLDEN WITH THE CORDS. By W. M. L. JAY.
52. A RED WALLFLOWER. By SUSAN WARNER.
53. JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN. By Mrs. CRAIK.
54. ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS.
55. CRANFORD. By Mrs. GASKELL.
56. WAVERLEY. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
57. HYPATIA. By CHARLES KINGSLEY.
58. IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND. By CHARLES READE.
59. ADAM BEDE. By GEORGE ELIOT.
60. WAGES. By L. T. MEADE.
61. BETWIXT TWO FIRES. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
62. THE MILL ON THE FLOSS. By GEORGE ELIOT.
63. MATTHEW MELLOWDEW. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
64. NESTLETON MAGNA. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
65. SHIP "DAPHNE." By T. S. MILLINGTON.
66. THE KEY TO THE RIDDLE. By MARGARET COMRIE.
67. WHEELS OF IRON. By L. T. MEADE.
68. DEBORAH. By JAMES M. LUDLOW.

THE "SUNSHINE" SERIES.

Crown 8vo. 1s. 6d. Illustrated.

1. A SUMMER IN THE LIFE OF TWO LITTLE CHILDREN. By Mrs. HOWARD.
2. OLIVER'S OLD PICTURES. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
3. LADY TEMPLE'S GRANDCHILDREN. By Miss EVERETT-GREEN.
4. A LONDON BABY. The Story of King Roy. By L. T. MEADE.
5. HIDDEN HOMES. By M. A. PAULL RIPLEY.
6. SIR VALENTINE'S VICTORY. By EMMA MARSHALL.
7. GERALD AND DOLLY. By D'ESTERRE.
8. STEPHEN, M.D. By SUSAN WARNER.
9. LITTLE WOMEN AND GOOD WIVES. By L. M. ALCOTT.
10. THE LETTER OF CREDIT. By SUSAN WARNER.
11. DAINTREE. By the Author of "Expelled," &c.
12. ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER. By ROSE PORTER.
13. MRS. LESTER'S GIRLS By the Author of "Miss Marston's Girls."
14. FIVE THOUSAND POUNDS. By AGNES GIBERNE.
15. READY? AYE READY! By AGNES GIBERNE.
16. JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN. By Mrs. CRAIK.
17. THE OLDER BROTHER. By PANSY.
18. THE HOME AT GREYLOCK. By Mrs. PRENTISS.
19. A VANISHED HAND. By SARAH DOUDNEY.
20. STEPPING HEAVENWARD. By Mrs. PRENTISS.
21. RUBY AND PEARL. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
22. TIME TRIES. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
23. CISSY'S TROUBLES. By "DARLEY DALE."
24. IN THE DAYS OF BRUCE. By GRACE AGUILAR.
25. IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND. By CHARLES READE.
26. THE PINK OF PERFECTION. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
27. THROUGH SHADOW TO SUNSHINE. By Mrs. HORNIBROOK.
28. STELLAFONT ABBEY. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
29. BESSIE ON HER TRAVELS. By JOANNA H. MATHEWS.
30. BESSIE AND HER FRIENDS. By JOANNA H. MATHEWS.
31. MAGGIE AND BESSIE. By JOANNA H. MATHEWS.
32. THREE LITTLE SPADES. By ANNA B. WARNER.
33. MORAG: A Tale of Highland Life. By Mrs. MILNE RAE.
34. THE STORY OF OUR ENGLISH BIBLE AND WHAT IT COST. By Mrs. BAILY.
35. LITTLE BRICKS. By "DARLEY DALE."
36. BESSIE AT SCHOOL. By JOANNA H. MATHEWS.

THE "BERNERS" SERIES.

Illustrated Crown 8vo, 1s. 6d.

1. THE THRONE OF DAVID. By J. H. INGRAHAM.
2. A PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. By J. H. INGRAHAM.
3. THE PILLAR OF FIRE. By J. H. INGRAHAM.
4. DERRY. A Tale of the Revolution of 1688.
5. TOO LATE FOR THE TIDE-MILL. By Rev. E. A. RAND.
6. A DREAM OF THE NORTH SEA. By J. RUNCIMAN.
7. WANDERING HOMES AND THEIR INFLUENCES. By LUCY NELSON.
8. FRANK WEATHERALL. By W. C. METCALFE.
9. SHORT LIVES OF MEN WITH A MISSION: Charles Kingsley, Lord Lawrence, Henry M. Stanley.
10. EXPELLED. By the Author of "Dorrinecourt."
11. BESSIE HARRINGTON'S VENTURE. By JULIA MATHEWS.
12. THE CHILDREN'S PILGRIMAGE. By L. T. MEADE.
13. THE YOUNG MAROONERS. By F. R. GOULDING.
14. THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD. By OLIVER GOLDSMITH.
15. A CANDLE IN THE SEA. By Rev. E. A. RAND.
16. JOHN KNOX AND HIS TIMES. By Miss WARREN.
17. C. H. SPURGEON. *The Story of his Life.* By *Rev. J. ELLIS*
18. SEVEN SONS. By "DARLEY DALE."
19. VINEGAR HILL. By ANNA WARNER.
20. CROSS CORNERS. By ANNA WARNER.
21. ONE LITTLE VEIN OF DROSS. By RUTH LAMB.
22. MISTRESS MATCHETT'S MISTAKE. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
23. BOXALL SCHOOL. By the Author of "Dorringcourt."
24. OLD CRUSTY'S NIECE. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
25. HONEST JOHN STALLIBRASS. By J. JACKSON WRAY.

THE "VICTORIA" SERIES.

Full Crown 8vo. Cloth Boards. 1s. 6d.

1. A KNIGHT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. By E. P. ROE.
2. DRAYTON HALL. By JULIA MATHEWS.
3. HOLDEN WITH THE CORDS. By W. M. L. JAY.
4. NOBODY. By SUSAN WARNER.
5. DARE TO DO RIGHT. By JULIA MATHEWS.
6. MY DESIRE. By SUSAN WARNER.
7. A PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. By J. H. INGRAHAM.
8. C. H. SPURGEON. The Story of his Life. By Rev. J. ELLIS.

THE "GOLDEN SILENCE" SERIES.

With Illustrations.

Small Crown 8vo. Attractively bound in cloth. 1s. each.

1. WHAT KATY DID. By SUSAN COOLIDGE.
2. AUNT JANE'S HERO; or, Sorrow and Sunshine. By Mrs. PRENTISS.
3. MICHAEL'S TREASURES. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
5. BESSIE AMONG THE MOUNTAINS. By JOANNA H. MATHEWS.
6. BESSIE AT THE SEASIDE. By JOANNA H. MATHEWS.
7. MR. RUTHERFORD'S CHILDREN. By SUSAN WARNER.
9. EFFIE'S FRIENDS; or, Chronicles of the Woods and Shore.
10. MATTHEW FROST. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
11. MY LADY BOUNTIFUL. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
12. THREE PATHS IN LIFE. By ELLEN BARLEE.
13. GRAN. By E. A. B. D.
14. THREE TIMES THREE. By PANSY.

THE "GOLDEN SILENCE" SERIES—continued.

15. PAT'S INHERITANCE. By Mrs MARSHALL.
16. NATURE'S GENTLEMAN. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
17. THE BRIDE'S HOME. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
18. MILES MURCHISON. By Miss GIBERNE.
19. SOME COMMON INSECTS. By EMILY DIBDIN.
20. FOOTSTEPS OF FORTUNE. By ESME STUART.
21. MY SON'S WIFE. By ROSE PORTER.
22. THE STORY OF JOHN MARBECK: A Windsor Organist of 300 Years Ago. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
23. MY GRANDMOTHER'S PICTURES. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
24. HIGH AND LOWLY. A Tale of the Hearts and Homes. By ELLEN L. DAVIS.
25. PETER PENGELLY; or, True as the Clock. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
26. NELLIE GRAHAM. The Story of a Commonplace Woman By ELLA STONE.
27. JACK HORNER THE SECOND. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
28. A SUNBEAM'S INFLUENCE. By Lady DUNBOYNE.
29. A BOY'S WILL. By ELLEN DAVIS.
30. THREE LITTLE SISTERS. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
31. THREE LITTLE BROTHERS. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
32. THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING OF KARL KRINKEN. By S. WARNER.
33. WHEN I WAS YOUNG. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
34. GOLDEN SILENCE. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
35. LETTICE LAWSON'S LEGACY. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
36. SIR BENJAMIN'S BOUNTY. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
37. MASTER MARTIN. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
38. KITTEN PILGRIMS. By R. M. BALLANTYNE.
39. GEOFFREY HALLAM; or, The Clerk of the Parish. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
40. "A SONG OF SIXPENCE" FOR THE BAIRNS. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
41. DAISY OF OLD MEADOW. By AGNES GIBERNE.
42. OLD UMBRELLAS. By AGNES GIBERNE.
43. CHARITY. By Lady DUNBOYNE.

THE WHITEHALL LIBRARY.

Printed on Antique Cream-laid Paper. Crown 8vo, bound in Green and Gold. Price 1s. 6d. each.

1. THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII. By Lord LYTTON.
2. SARTOR RESARTUS. By THOMAS CARLYLE.
3. JANE EYRE. By CHARLOTTE BRONTË.
4. HYPATIA. By CHARLES KINGSLEY.
5. IVANHOE. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
6. CRANFORD. By Mrs. GASKELL.
7. ROB ROY. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
8. THE LAST OF THE BARONS. By Lord LYTTON.
9. THE PIRATE. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
10. HENRY ESMOND. By W. M. THACKERAY.
11. OLD MORTALITY. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
12. THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR. By Sir WALTER SCOTT.
13. THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD. By OLIVER GOLDSMITH.
14. THE CAXTONS. By Lord LYTTON.
15. THE ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS.

SERIES OF BOOKS FOR YOUNG MEN AND GIRLS.

By Dr. MILLER, F. A. ATKINS, Rev. J. REID HOWATT, and Others.

YOUNG MEN AND GIRLS: Faults and Ideals. By Dr. J. R Miller, Author of "Making the Most of Life," "Glimpses through Life's Window," &c. &c. Small crown 8vo. 1s. Also sold separately, charmingly bound in leatherette, 6d. each.

ASPIRATION AND ACHIEVEMENT. A Young Man's Message to Young Men. By F. A. Atkins. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

Dr. R. F. Horton writes: "I have rarely read a more salutary book."

LIFE WITH A PURPOSE. By Rev. J. Reid Howatt. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

MORAL MUSCLE: And How to Use It. A Brotherly Chat with Young Men. By F. A. Atkins. With an Introduction by Rev. Thain Davidson, D.D. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

FAITH'S STRONG FOUNDATIONS. By the Rev. J. Reid Howatt. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

YOUTH'S IDEALS. By the Rev. J. Reid Howatt. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

FIRST BATTLES, AND HOW TO FIGHT THEM. By F. A. Atkins. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

AFTER HOURS; or, The Religion of our Leisure Time. By the Rev. J. Reid Howatt. With Appendix on How to Form a Library for Twenty Shillings. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE. By Dr. Clifford, M.A.; Professor Elmslie, D.D.; R. F. Horton, M.A.; Rev. F. B. Meyer, B.A.; Rev. C. H. Waller, M.A.; Rev. H. C. G. Moule, M.A.; Rev. C. A. Berry; Rev. J. W. Dawson. Third Edition. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

AGNOSTIC FALLACIES. Small crown 8vo. 1s.

THE "ROSE" SERIES.

Attractively bound in neat cloth boards. Small crown 8vo. Illustrated. 9d. each.

1. DOLLY'S CHARGE. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
2. FRAMILODE HALL. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
3. BEN BRIGHTBOOTS. By F. R. HAVERGAL.
4. THE BOY GUARDIAN. By C. E. BOWEN.
5. OUR LADDIE. By Miss L. J. TOMLINSON.
6. HELEN; or, Temper and its Consequences. By Mrs. GLADSTONE.
7. THE CAPTAIN'S STORY; or, The Disobedient Son. By W. S. MARTIN.
8. MOUNTAIN MILL. By H. O. COAPE.
9. MAITLAND'S MONEY-BOX. By LADY DUNBOYNE.
10. SEE FOR YOURSELF. By GRACE STEBBING.
11. FRANK GORDON, by F. R. GOULDING; and LITTLE JACK, by ANNA WARNER.
12. STEPHEN GILMORE'S DREAM; or, Coals of Fire. By JESSIE W. SMITH.
13. THE SPOILT TWINS. By EMILY DIBDIN.
14. SAM'S MISSION. By BEATRICE MARSHALL, Author of "Dolly's Charge," &c.
15. MONA. By H. S. STREATFEILD.
16. PARSON'S GREEN. By G. NORWAY.
17. WIDOW WINPENNY'S WATCHWORD. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
18. THE MAN WITH THE KNAPSACK. By J. JACKSON WRAY.
19. LOTTA'S LIFE MISTAKE. By Mrs. EVERED POOLE.
20. VIOLET IN THE SHADE. By Mrs. MARSHALL.
21. CHINA AND ITS PEOPLE. By a Missionary's Wife.
22. SUNDAY OCCUPATIONS. By Mrs. BARCLAY.
23. SIMPLE LESSONS FROM NATURE. By Miss LEIGH.
24. FOR OTHERS. By CHARLOTTE MASON.
25. BITTER AND SWEET. By S. DOUDNEY.
26. TO-DAY AND YESTERDAY. By Mrs. MARSHALL.